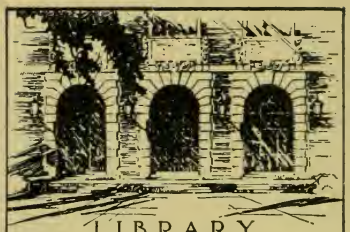

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WOODLEIGH.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"ONE AND TWENTY," "WILDFLOWER,"

"THE HOUSE OF ELMORE,"

&c.

"The wynde is greate upon the highest hylles,
The quiet lyfe is in the dale belowe,
Who treades on vse shall slyde against their willis,
They want not cares that curious artes would know.
Who lyues at ease and can content him so,
Is perfect wise, and sets vs all to schole,
Who hates this lore may well be called a foole."

A MYRROUR FOR MAGISTRATES, 1571.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BOOK VI.

"ITALIA! oh, Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past,
On thy sweet brow is sorrow plough'd by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame."

BYRON.

"Oh, sir! the good die first,
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket."

WORDSWORTH.

WOODLEIGH.

CHAPTER I.

ABROAD.

Mr. Markingham was right—one does not give up to despair at nineteen years of age, be the disappointment ever so bitter. Nineteen soon patches up the wounds at its heart and gives over apostrophizing the stars; romance loses its morbid charms, and reality comes in for a fair share of favor.

Not that I forgot Constance Woodleigh—my memory was a retentive one, and I could not wholly chase from my thoughts the sunny-faced cousin who had said No to my love suit. Had

I met her in the foreign lands through which I journeyed with Markingham, doubtless the old follies would have started again to the light to unnerve me, for there were times, even in the midst of the excitement of travel, when I felt the most miserable being that ever cumbered the surface of earth.

Those times became few and far between, and it is hardly just to ascribe them to my heart complaint; for was not the indolent, aimless nature of my life more answerable?

Travel, though it improved my health, and dissipated to a certain extent my morbidity, did not render me more content, and Miss Bowden seemed right in her prophecy that I should never make a happy man.

Was I on the right road to happiness?—were an easy friend, a full purse, and my own way in everything better than hard work at the books with a task-master over me? Is it well for anyone with warm blood in his veins to sit by the wayside and hold aloof from the workers—nay, is not stone-breaking on the king's highway a more noble employment?

Seventeen months of incessant travelling,

despite the wonders one meets with, are wearisome work, unless the traveller be blessed with a 'Mission.'

At the end of that period I was secretly and heartily tired of foreign cities, faces, and languages, and experienced more fatigue than pleasure in the study of them.

We did not gallop over the Continent, and then helter-skelter back to England in time for the next publishing season and our new book of travels; we had time and money to get rid of, and went slowly from capital to capital in a very un-English manner.

During seventeen months I received little news from those I had left behind; a mother's letter now and then was all that reached my hand to remind me of England. There was no news of my uncle or his family in her letters; my mother kept away from Paddington, and knew nothing concerning her first husband's kinsfolk. Her letters were full of Mr. Bowden, of the progress he was making in public estimation, and of the excellent man he was in every sense of the word.

In her last letter my mother communicated some tidings of Miss Bowden; a letter had been received by my step-father from that eccentric young lady—a brief, abrupt epistle, stating she was well, and that there was no occasion for anxiety on her account; it entered into no explanation of her reasons for leaving the Woodleighs, and made no mention of her present place of residence, but left all in the clouds as before.

At the end of my seventeen months' pilgrimage I was still far distant from England, sunning myself under a southern sky in the kingdom of Naples—false glittering kingdom, beneath whose scales is the serpent; brightest of emeralds in a sapphirine sea—"Fragment of heaven dropped on earth,"—"Paradise seen from Hell!"

We reached Naples at an inauspicious time. It was the beginning of December, 1847, when the seeds of a hundred revolutions had been committed to the earth, and the spirit of resistance was slowly gathering strength. Discontent was hovering over many a fair city; the two great classes, the powerful and

powerless, were drifting separate ways, and the deep mutterings of the storms of '48 were audible.

We found Naples, under the amiable rule of Ferdinand the Gentle, a trifle more disturbed than other lands, the pressure of the hand upon the throat of the nation leaving a darker mark. Naples is at all times an excitable city, and in December, 1847, it needed no keen observer to guess the eve of an explosion. Never did the restless mountain which crowns that kingdom give surer signs of danger.

There was too much whispering round the fountains and in the market-places, on the quays and before the palace gates; too much angry discussion of politics between people naturally light-hearted enough to care for nothing but their pleasures, their lottery chances, and a few carlini. Conspirators were busy, and spies were everywhere; secret clubs were organized and broken up; prisons were full of innocent and guilty—they are not particular in Naples!—arrests were made at every hour of the day, of foreigners, natives,

rich men, and lazzaroni; ministers lumbering by in their carriages were pointed out and menaced; the shadow of coming events was cast upon the city.

Still business went on as usual, and the streets of Naples were full of life and bustle. One or two nervous travellers left the city, but the majority of visitors remained, Mr. Markingham and I amongst the number.

"Naples will last our time, Woodleigh," commented Mr. Markingham; "the hour is not ripe for the tri-color and the barricades—we'll spend Christmas with the Neapolitans."

"With all my heart, sir," was my answer; "and if there be a disturbance, why, there will be a chance of engaging in it."

"On the King's side, or the people's?"

"The people's, to be sure."

"A dangerous side to choose in a city where the people don't know their own minds two minutes together. Are you becoming tired of this kind of life that you want some excitement?"

"I should like something to do!"

"You were not made for a gentleman, Woodleigh; you don't take the fortunes of life philosophically."

We were strolling down the famous Toledo, observing the activity and excitement of Neapolitan life. The carriages were slowly moving in the roadway, the crowds of vendors of everything eatable and uneatable were making the air ring with their clamor, gaily-clad soldiers, monks, peasant girls from distant villages, in costumes which one never sees off the stage in England, legions of beggars with every complaint under the sun, improvisatores, dancers, and nuns were jostling together. But it is an old subject, this Toledo, and I will not weary the reader with a threadbare description of what every tourist has, in these universal travelling days, seen for himself. To my story, for I have not brought the reader so long a distance from home for nothing.

Mr. Markingham and I were retracing our steps down the Toledo towards our hotel on the Chiaia, threading our way through a maze of figures in an every-day carnival,

when we came upon three persons whose attire and whose interest in the lively scene through which they passed betokened them visitors like ourselves.

Mr. Markingham caught me by the arm.

"Are we dreaming, Woodleigh, or are well-known faces to follow us to Naples and remind us of the land we have deserted? See!"

There were two gentlemen and an English lady. The lady was leaning on the arm of the younger man—a tall and very handsome man, whom to see once was to bear a long while in remembrance, one whom I had imagined at college, working hard for his degree, cousin Dick Woodleigh.

He was better looking than ever—he had exchanged the English hat for a rakish-looking velvet cap with a red tassel, and his complexion, a little browned by an Italian sun, showed him off to advantage. He seemed on very good terms with himself, as usual, and was caressing his left whisker with a pink-gloved hand in an affectionate manner. His companions were the late Squire Heberdeen and daughter—the Squire the model of an

English gentleman; the daughter, beautiful but pale.

As they advanced, Markingham muttered:

"Who is the simpering Narcissus with Harriet Heberdeen, I wonder?"

"Richard Woodleigh, a cousin of mine, sir."

"So, so," said Markingham; "a cousin of yours, and a friend of the Heberdeens; travelling hither with them too—it looks suspicious. Is he engaged to Miss Heberdeen?"

"I have heard so," was my answer.

We were face-to-face at last, and Miss Heberdeen was the first to recognize us, and direct the attention of her companions towards us. Squire Heberdeen started when he found Mr. Markingham close at his side, and Dick's eyes opened to a considerable extent at my unlooked-for appearance on the Strada di Toledo.

The meeting was far from a frigid one. Richard Woodleigh shook hands with me heartily, and Squire Heberdeen imitated his example with an old friend and late adversary.

"Markingham! Mr. Woodleigh!" cried he; "it is pleasant to meet with a face one knows in these outlandish parts. I hope you are well."

"Very well, thank you," answered Markingham; "may I trust Miss Heberdeen is the same?"

Miss Heberdeen, with whom I had been exchanging civilities, replied:—

"I am better than I have been, Mr. Markingham, thank you."

"Have you been ill then?" he asked anxiously.

"Too ill to remain in England, poor girl," said the Squire; "for our physician has strongly recommended Italy."

"When Hastings, or the west of England, would have been equally beneficial," added Miss Heberdeen, with a smile.

"Doctor Barland said Italy, and Italy it is," said the Squire, half angrily. "Naples before Hastings, health before economy. I would spend my last penny to see the roses on your cheeks again, my girl!"

"They are left behind at Nettleton," she answered.

"We will find them again in Naples, girl; Italian roses blooming at Christmas. But we are very remiss in our introductions—Mr. Markingham, Mr. Richard Woodleigh."

Hat and velvet cap courteously raised, smiles exchanged, two keen grey eyes looking into two brown ones.

"Delighted to make the acquaintance of Mr. Woodleigh," said Markingham.

Richard Woodleigh bowed, and asserted that the pleasure was mutual.

"Your son is not in Naples?" said Markingham, turning to the Squire.

"I should be sorry to see him idling his time here, now he has his own fortune to make; and I am sure he would be sorry to waste time himself. Markingham," said the Squire, his eyes glistening, "you would not believe the change that has come to my boy—how he improves, what a dear son he is to me, what energy and resolution there are in him! He has only one enemy in his nature to fight against—a proud and hasty temper—and he will conquer that soon. Rome was not built in a day."

"A hasty temper!" remarked Markingham; "that must be a trial to its possessor—eh, Robert?" wheeling round to me.

"A great trial," said I, repaying Mr. Markingham with a scowl for his pointed allusion.

"These paths were not made for loiterers," affirmed the Squire, as two Neapolitans, with a huge basket between them, nearly bore him into the roadway; "and His Majesty of the Two Sicilies may suspect treason in our conversation."

"If you be not engaged to-day, Heberdeen," said Markingham, "it would be a great pleasure to meet you at my hotel."

Heberdeen shook his head.

"No, no," said he, with a laugh that had a little sadness in it; "I cannot sit at my adversary's table yet, even in Naples, where an English foe is better than an Italian friend. Has not the past for ever separated us?"

"I thought so once," replied Markingham; "but time has taught me that we should not carry our enmity through life with us."

"Well, I bear no enmity," said the Squire, "why should I? I was in possession of your

property, and you had a right to take it from me, *sans doute.*"

"Then—" began Markingham.

"Some other time," interrupted the Squire, "we will discuss the question. Have you been long in Naples?"

"About a week."

"Strange we have not met before," said Heberdeen; "and yet"—correcting himself—"not very strange, our hotels being as wide asunder as the poles. You are at the Vittoria, I presume?"

"Yes."

"Ah! we cannot afford the Chiaia and the Bay of Naples, now-a-days; we are content with more humble quarters in—no matter."

"We shall meet again," said Markingham. "Fate throws us together, and Montague and Capulet may as well sheath the sword for ever."

"There is little reason against it," murmured the Squire.

"For the present, then, adieu," said Markingham, raising his hat; "farewell, Miss Heberdeen; the sooner the roses return, the

better pleased will be an old—the oldest friend of the family! Mr. Woodleigh, will you favor us, at your leisure, with a call?"

"With pleasure, Mr. Markingham."

Exchange of salutations, and then the Heberdeens and cousin Dick went their way, and Mr. Markingham stood by my side and looked after them in an absent manner.

"It is singular," he murmured, when we had resumed our walk.

"What is singular?"

"This yearning of mine to cry peace to my enemy. Is it his misfortune that has softened my heart and drawn the sting from my tongue, cancelled the bitter memories, and awakened those that are purer and better? It is very strange."

"The sight of an English face in this mob of burnt skins, of English composure amidst Neapolitan restlessness, is a change and a relief."

"You could not have brightened up more at the sight of your cousin, had he been the favorite one, Woodleigh," said Markingham. "He is a fine young fellow, yet—"

"Yet?" I repeated.

"Yet, there is a something I don't like in his face—perhaps it's his good looks, for we men of forty-four don't admire handsome young men any more than an old maid falls into ecstasies over a beauty in the flush of her first season. But I shall see more of him—that is, if he will give me the chance."

Richard Woodleigh soon gave Mr. Markingham the chance he desired. The following evening he strolled into the Vittoria as if that hotel belonged to him, and was duly ushered into the drawing-room of Signor Markingham. Richard Woodleigh was soon at home with Mr. Markingham; he had great conversational powers, and Mr. Markingham did his best that night to bring them into play. They talked of college-life, of Neapolitan politics, of any topic that came uppermost, and it struck me, as I sat observing them, and taking little share in the conversation, that Richard Woodleigh was as anxious to study Stephen Markingham as that gentleman was to observe Richard Woodleigh. At all events,

both gentlemen appeared to be on their guard, and fencing carefully over their wine.

When my cousin had gone, Markingham said to me:—

"I don't like him, Woodleigh."

"Yet you have seen him to advantage, sir. He was certainly in one of his most amiable moods."

"Possibly; but the false glitter has not dazzled my understanding, as it has—Miss Heberdeen's."

Richard Woodleigh did not give me his opinion of Mr. Markingham when I met him in the Riviera de Chiaia the following day. Was it by accident he was strolling near the Vittoria at so early an hour?—he who was never an early riser.

"Ah! Robert," said he, shaking me by both hands in his delight at seeing me; "glad to meet you, cousin. I say, what a giant you have grown lately!"

"You forget it is an age since I left England, Richard—a growing age."

"True. Are you for a stroll in the Villa Reale?"

"With pleasure?"

We sauntered into the aristocratic gardens of the Villa Reale, Dick Woodleigh's arm passed through mine in a brotherly manner.

"You are a lucky fellow, Robert Woodleigh," said he; "one in a hundred thousand, to meet with a rich patron early in life—a patron with no friends or relations. Mr. Markingham came in for the lion's share of the Heberdeen money, did he not?"

"The greater portion, I believe."

"Is there not a doubt of his retaining it, Robert—talk of another will or something?"

"I have not heard so."

"Young Heberdeen often regrets his want of funds to continue the battle—talks of counsel's advice, and a hundred things; but the old Squire shakes his head, and will not be troubled any more with the law. How do you like Naples?"

"Well enough," was my answer; "it is a spirited place—plenty of animation to keep the blue devils away. How is it that

Richard Woodleigh is indulging in so long a leave of absence?"

"From home, or college, do you mean?"

"College."

His eyebrows lowered over his fine eyes as he answered moodily:—

"Necessity keeps me from college, inclination from home."

"I do not understand you."

"Bob Woodleigh, you are an old friend; we have always been attached to one another," said he, pressing my arm warmly; "I will tell you all."

Considerably astonished at this confession of my cousin's attachment, I waited for his revelation.

"Robert," he began, the dark expression on his countenance predominant, "it may be a pleasant thing for a tradesman to become rich, but it is a bad thing for his children. They belong to no class, the well-born look down upon them, and they dare not mix with the dregs from which sprung the father. But there is something worse than that in the father himself—for, with all his riches, there

never departs from him the low sordid notions of the huckster. With thousands at his banker's, he will struggle for a sixpence, and begrudge every pound he gives away."

"You are not speaking from experience, Richard?"

"Yes, I am," he cried sharply; "I am speaking of my father, who has disgraced me —whom I never wish to see again!"

"Why?—what has happened at home? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing right. The truth is, I got into debt at college — ran up a few bills, perhaps was a trifle more extravagant than the majority, knowing my expectations. I don't disguise it from you, Robert, I was extravagant, *there!* Well, somehow it came to the governor's ears, and what do you think he did?"

"Paid your bills?"

"Damned if he did," cried Dick; "instead of settling the accounts and starting me afresh—it would not have affected his pocket much—he went down to Oxford, found out every tradesman to whom I owed a few

pounds, looked at every bill with the eye of a miser, said it was an extortion and a swindle, and he would see me arrested before he paid one half of my debts."

"And how did it end?"

"By my creditors coming to some infernal arrangement or other, which made me ridiculous in the eyes of society. Fancy my father coming down to Oxford, haggling like an old Jew, and making me the talk of the place for weeks. But that wasn't all; after he had settled the bills—it didn't cost him two thousand pounds altogether—he turned upon me, said he had been deceived in me, that I was a spendthrift and a profligate, had no principle in me, and was no more fit for the Church than he was. He wanted to cut down my allowance—and as we are both excitable temperaments we had a few words, in which Upton must join, to be sure, and take his father's part. We didn't get on any better for *his* interference, and so it ended in my threatening to go abroad, and—keeping my threat, too."

"And your mother?"

"Oh! she was cut up of course—they didn't care about making her ill in their selfishness —I believe, Robert, they really wanted to get rid of me!"

"But you came to some arrangement before you left?"

"I was not foolish enough to leave without a little understanding concerning money matters," he replied; "but he screwed me down of course—it would not have been the governor if he had not! Screwed me down so that I am often compelled to ask the loan of a few pounds on the strength of the next remittance — humiliating, is it not?"

"Very," said I.

"And as I have no friends in this volcanic region, I must look to you, Robert, when I am hard up—not that I am short of money at present, quite the contrary."

"I am sorry to hear that you have quarrelled with your father—what does Miss Heberdeen say?"

"I have just joined the Heberdeens in Naples, and there has not been time yet for

any explanation. What do you think of my choice, Robert?"

"Miss Heberdeen, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Your choice says a great deal for your good sense—your good taste."

"Good taste, undeniably, for there is not a prettier girl in the world," said he, with the first flash of enthusiasm he had, perhaps, ever exhibited; "but there are a great many people would question my sense. You see, she is not an heiress now; she had better chances when I was first engaged to her."

"Do you regret your engagement, then?"

"No," he answered, "or I should have taken her at her word when she offered to cancel it after the Markingham victory. I liked the girl too much for that, and," with a yawn, "as it would have broken her heart to give me up, I kept to the engagement. Harriet Heberdeen is the only one who cares for me in the world, the only one who puts up with my bad temper, sees virtues in my vices, and forgives all my follies. Never was a girl

more romantic or more loving. She won't see a fault in me, isn't that capital?"

"She will make the best of wives," said I, thinking at the same time that he would make the worst of husbands.

"She is one of the simplest little beauties that was ever born," said Dick; "she knows nothing of the world, and believes everything is good in it. As for me—I am a hero in her estimation, and she will never lose faith in the idol she worships."

"I hope she never will."

"That's her one fault, Robert, too much gentleness. If she had some of her brother's spirit I should love her all the more. We have not had one quarrel since our engagement, and when I have tried to tease her about my conquests I have always failed. I should like to see more fire in her nature, more opposition. I hate 'yes' to everything."

"You should have paid your attentions to Miss Bowden."

Dick started.

"What ever put Miss Bowden in your head?"

"You were speaking of a fiery nature."

"Ah! there was spirit in *her*, was there not? I wonder where she vanished to! It was a ghost-like movement, and all the efforts of —the family," he added, after a pause, "could not discover a trace. If—but have you not had enough of the Villa Reale and this eternal Bay of Naples? If it would only change color now and then, not be always of a bright staring blue, how much better it would be! Shall we start for Posilipo?"

"Are you not engaged this morning?"

"I don't remember making any special promise to the Heberdeens—the Squire won't miss me, and Harriet will be all the more glad to see me when I *do* make my appearance. Posilipo be it."

I could not help thinking, as we left the Villa Reale, that cousin Dick was not the most noble or considerate of mortals. I thought it was strange also that any one should make an idol of him, waste the best feelings of the heart on one whose first study was evidently himself. I did not know then the power of the man, the knowledge of human nature he

possessed, the art of disguising his mind and sentiments when he felt inclined. He had never cared to hide his true character from me, selfish and worldly as it was, and I could but wonder where lay the charm which induced others to regard him with favor. His confidence of that morning, his talk of his home, of his future wife, of his own failings, was flattering to me, although it was a studied frankness. It would not have suited with his plans to have become suddenly all that was good.

For some reason he wished to make me his friend and companion, and if he overacted his part at the first attempt, and was a trifle too candid, he played his game more carefully when opportunity brought us together.

Whether he left his greatest spell to the last, I cannot say, but it was some days before he spoke of Constance—his favorite sister!—and won me for an attentive listener.

"It was a surprise to me, that engagement with young Heberdeen," he remarked one day, "and I cannot fancy now she likes him in her heart. Do you think they will ever be married?"

"What is to hinder a marriage between them?" I asked eagerly.

"Ned Heberdeen is fond of his own way — is of a jealous, overbearing nature, and is still as proud as Lucifer. Constance is a girl of quick perceptions, and will soon see what a miserable life lies before her. There will be a quarrel—mark my words."

"A lover's quarrel is soon over."

"Not when the lover is Ned Heberdeen, who would rather die than give in or be gracious. I should be sorry to see Constance his wife, although Heberdeen is a dear friend of mine. Ah! Constance is the best of the Woodleighs, pity she's so romantic."

"Romantic," repeated I.

Dick laughed.

"Romantic enough to nearly fall in love with her cousin Robert once upon a time."

"This is very foolish jesting, Richard."

"I'm not jesting, Robert," answered my cousin; "I assure you there were more eyes than mine keeping watch over you both, lest you should make a runaway match of it."

"I never told a living soul of my attach-

ment to your sister when I was your father's clerk."

"More than one guessed it though, and set their wits to work to hinder a probable folly —for it would have been a folly *then*."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Caroline was too quick for you," said Dick, "and was artful enough to reason Constance out of her sentimentalism. Ah! Caroline Woodleigh is too cunning for this world; she has upset more plans than one of mine, and I haven't forgiven her yet."

"Then — then Constance really did *once* think of me! You are sure of that, you say?"

"But a new lover has stepped into the field, and, woman-like, the old love is forgotten. Besides," said he, "you are a rich man, and can make a better match. You are not foolish enough to think anything of her now?"

"Oh! no—of course not."

"First-love never comes to anything — it's all moonshine."

After that day Richard Woodleigh and I were the best of friends—inseparables. What

a frank, dashing fellow he suddenly became; impetuous at times, as most men are—vain, as all men are, who have any good looks to boast of—but a straightforward, plain-spoken friend. He was nearer my own age than Markingham — was it not natural that I should prefer his company to that of the philosopher? Besides, was he not the brother of Constance? and had he not told me a secret which set my heart almost beating again for the unattainable?

CHAPTER II.

BAD NEWS.

Time, which passed on and strengthened the intimacy between me and Dick Woodleigh, did not renew the past friendship between Markingham and the late Squire of Nettleton.

Mr. Heberdeen did not readily respond to Markingham's offer of friendship, and although there were times when his pride strangely softened, yet there were also moments when he turned away with a coldness that brought the flush to the face of my patron.

Nevertheless, Markingham persisted;—'that strange yearning,' to be friends with

his old rival did not die for want of encouragement — he kept his ground, and sought out the Squire as anxiously at times as I sought out my cousin.

Thrown together in a foreign land, we had many opportunities of meeting the Heberdeens, and the Squire could not always turn from us with a nod and 'good day.' Mr. Markingham took also an interest in the engagement between Miss Heberdeen and Richard Woodleigh, and the lovers were never long together without Markingham's eyes sharply regarding them. He made a study of them, and hardly a look escaped him. Dick Woodleigh was right—he was certainly a hero in Harriet Heberdeen's estimation, an idol which she worshipped. And Dick at that time probably loved her as well as he could love anybody except himself, for such a love as hers would have softened the heart of a stoic.

In her sight, at her side, meeting the fond glances from eyes which knew no disguise, he was a different being, and might well have deceived an artless girl like Miss Heberdeen —and yet what a coward and a traitor he was!

As I write this, knowing him now so well, knowing more of his heart, and its baseness, than is yet laid bare to the reader, the blood warms in my veins, and my pulse beats the faster. He deceived Miss Heberdeen, and at her side, I believe, he deluded himself. There are some men with more lives than one, and some whose real life is known but to Him whose hand formed them.

Mr. Markingham's distrust of my cousin slowly increased. Richard Woodleigh's show of virtues did not mislead the man of the world.

"The more I see of your cousin, the more I suspect him," said Markingham; "and I would warn you, Woodleigh, to be on your guard."

"On guard—against what?"

"That puzzles me at present," said Markingham; "still, I say again, *prenez garde!* He is an accomplished man, a showy talker, a deep reasoner, and a dangerous friend."

"When he drops the mask, it will be time to drop him."

"The mask does not fall suddenly from the

face of the tempter. However, follow your own way. You are the best judge of your friends and your enemies, and are not the only one dazzled by Richard Woodleigh's perfections."

"You should warn Miss Heberdeen, sir."

"My suspicions are but shadows, and I would not needlessly alarm her," said Markingham; "time enough *for her* when the reality comes; I shall be on the watch. She, the child of the only woman I ever loved, shall marry some one deserving her."

Mr. Markingham marched out of the room, and I saw him no more till my return with Dick Woodleigh from the lottery in the Castel Capuano.

Time went on. There came a day when the hearts of most Englishmen soften, and Squire Heberdeen's pride unbent sufficiently to accept Markingham's invitation for himself and daughter to dinner on Christmas Day, 1847.

It was a memorable day, for the same five persons never again met together to wish each other Merry Christmas.

Squire Heberdeen and Markingham talked a great deal of old times, and forgot, for a day, their differences over their wine.

It was a pleasant task for me to watch the courteous attention of Markingham to Miss Heberdeen, and try to reconcile that polished beau and thorough gentleman of four-and-forty with the slipshod personage who used to wear faded baize dressing-gowns, and philosophize over his poverty. Miss Heberdeen, to whose fair cheeks the roses, true to her father's prophecy, had returned, looked happy enough by the side of her betrothed; and Dick, though he yawned a great deal during the evening, seemed to enjoy himself.

The beginning of the next week was to witness the departure of one of our little party, Richard Woodleigh having been suddenly summoned to London. The servant brought the letter in haste from his hotel to ours, where my cousin happened to be.

"Is anything wrong, Richard?" I asked, as he turned pale, sat back in the chair, and drew a long breath.

"Yes; the governor's very ill—given

over," he cried, springing to his feet. "A sudden attack of paralysis, Upton writes. I am to return at once. Here, read."

Whilst I was perusing the note which he had tossed towards me, Richard Woodleigh, in a strange state of excitement, paced the drawing-room, his arms folded, his looks bent downwards. Mr. Markingham, who had been standing at the window gazing out at the Bay, turned round and regarded him, followed him with his eyes, and watched his every step.

"Sad news," said I, holding the letter towards him; "but I trust the result will not be so bad as Upton fears. It is very sudden."

Cousin Dick took no heed of the letter, or of my comments upon it; he continued his rapid walk, the eyes of Mr. Markingham still on him.

"And I am penned here, hundreds and hundreds of miles away," he cried at last, "whilst my enemies are setting him against me!"

It was an outburst that he could not check, cunning as he was; it was the one thought

burning in his brain, and his passion for a moment carried him away.

"I must go at once—I must begin my journey!" he cried, snatching at the letter, and crushing it in his hand. "There is much to be done at home, and every minute's precious. We shall meet in London, Robert. Good bye!"

He rushed out of the room before I had recovered my surprise. Mr. Markingham and I exchanged glances.

"Poor fellow!" I said, "it is a great shock. I am very sorry for him—and for those at home."

"He must be a hard man on whom such news makes no impression," said Markingham, "and a harder man still whose first thought is for the money left behind, not for the father stricken down."

"I don't think you have a right to judge so hastily, Mr. Markingham."

"I judge by appearances," was the reply; "in the fulness of the heart, the tongue of Richard Woodleigh betrayed itself."

I did not discuss the point; I was in no

mood for argument, and I had my own doubts as to the real nature of cousin Dick's troubles. The news had disturbed me too; and as I descended to the Chiaia, and hurried along in search of a quiet spot for reflection, I could but think of the blow that had fallen on those I had left behind happy—on the weak wife, the fond daughters, on Upton, whose reverence for his father was a something deep and holy.

"It may not be so bad as they anticipate," I thought, "I may soon hear good news from Dick."

But no good news came—no letter, and the first tidings I received stared me from that column in the *Times* which gives to the world daily its brief announcements of sorrow.

"*Died, Dec.*, 1847 *; at his residence, Grove House, Paddington, Mr. James Woodleigh, aged* 58, *deeply regretted by his friends and relatives.*"

Thus had the destroying hand come at last in the midst of the Woodleighs, and snatched first at him who had been their help and support. As I looked gloomily at the *Times*,

at the well-known name coupled with that other name known unto us all, I wished that I had seen him once again, and bidden him good bye before I left for foreign lands.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE THE STORM.

In the second week of January, 1848, King Ferdinand the Second of Naples—may his shadow some day be less!—was startled in his royal palace by news from Sicily. Such news as sent the life-blood to his heart, and excited his mercurial subjects to delirium. Sicily had thrown off the yoke of the oppressor, and drawn the sword in earnest; Messina, Catania, Syracuse, even Palermo, it was rumored, were in the hands of the revolutionists, and the soldiers of the King were waiting help from Naples.

He who has seen Naples in its sober

moments, and wondered if the tarantula has not been busy with its people, can form some idea of the effect which the tidings from Sicily created. Madness appeared to have seized the people in the streets, at the cafés, in the markets; men and women ran frantically about and told the news, nobles and lazzaroni, national guard and priests, fishermen, peasants, and Zampognatori—who had not yet taken back their bagpipes to the Abruzzi, although the Christmas of 1847 was three weeks old—beggars and thieves fraternized together, stood, or rather danced, in groups, flung about their arms, fought, swore, and prayed. Shopkeepers left their goods to hear the last report which, fabricated by some lying Neapolitan, had never come from Sicily; strange faces, which were unknown in Naples, and had sedition stamped upon them, rose as if by magic in the streets, were seen in the open squares and market-places, mingled with the thousands of loiterers before the Palazzo Reale, wherein the leech was drawing blood from Bomba.

On the following day the city, from an early

hour in the morning, resounded with the tramp of soldiers and the rattle of artillery; and from daybreak till late in the afternoon the sullen King of Naples, ill as he was, remained in the harbor watching the embarcation of his troops, and praying perhaps with his white lips for help to tyranny and murder.

Squire Heberdeen, almost as excited as the Neapolitans by the news, forgot his loftiness and reserve, and came to Markingham to discuss the politics of Sicily; his English blood was warmed, and he was anxious to express his opinions on the subject and hear those of Mr. Markingham. But Mr. Markingham was not disposed to hazard a remark in the drawing-room of the Hôtel Vittoria, where half the visitors might be spies of the police for what he knew of the matter.

"Better hear and say nothing, Squire," said Markingham, looking sharply round him to make sure a fourth person was not at his elbow; "Naples is a dangerous place for free conversation, and underground accommodation in the Castle of St. Elmo is not worth striving after."

"Perhaps you are right," answered the Squire, "but, like my dear boy Ned, I am too hot-headed to be cautious, and it's really enough to enrage a saint to hear of the vile—"

"When do you intend to leave Naples?" quietly interrupted Markingham.

"Not till my Harriet has entirely recovered her strength," replied he; "for now we are here, living is cheaper than in England, and," with a smile, "one must study economy now-a-days."

"I think we had better seize the first opportunity to withdraw," said Markingham; "the storm has begun in Sicily; Tuscany has not done fermenting, and Naples may come in for a share of the firebrands which Discordia is lavishly scattering."

"There are too many troops at the beck of Ferdinand at present," said the Squire, "and the Neapolitans are aware of it."

"The king must give way then, and get rid of his confessor and a few of his false friends. But," cried he, "here we are drifting into politics notwithstanding our

caution. Mr. Robert Woodleigh, here, sets us the best example by his silence."

"Silent people think the more, Mr. Markingham," I answered.

"Are you anxious to quit Naples, Mr. Woodleigh?" asked the Squire, turning to me.

"Not if there be a chance of the Neapolitans imitating the Sicilians," said I. "It is time the Bourbon—"

"There, there, you had better say no more," cried Markingham; "I can guess your sentiments, and so can Mr. Heberdeen. You may be inclined to stay in Naples and see what a revolution is like, but Mr. Heberdeen and I are older and more cautious men."

"*I* am not anxious to leave the city," said Heberdeen.

"You are not alone, Squire," observed Markingham, significantly.

"True, true," answered Heberdeen—"there is Harriet—you reprove me justly, Markingham. We must watch these signs of tempest carefully—a few more days will tell."

The few more days passed, and despite inflammatory placards which were found in the early morning at the corners of the streets, despite the continuance of the struggle in Sicily, and the disembarking of wounded troops upon the quay at Naples, nothing more serious occurred than a few false alarms, which kept the lazzaroni and the soldiers lively. Some small concessions to the people, and some very extensive promises, the presence of a large number of troops in Naples, and of a larger number in the environs, appeared to exercise an effect upon those to whom the iron rule of Ferdinand was irksome.

"The storm-clouds are breaking up," said Squire Heberdeen to Mr. Markingham, at their next meeting.

"It appears so," answered Markingham, in a fidgety manner; "but that is no reason why we should linger here."

"I shall remain some three months longer, now," said the Squire—"when do you think of leaving Naples?"

"I don't know," Markingham replied

shortly—"perhaps next week, or next month —it depends upon circumstances."

A few days after that brief dialogue, three cannon shot from the Castle of St. Elmo startled Mr. Markingham and me.

"Do you hear that," cried I, starting to my feet.

"Yes; it has come at last, and Squire Heberdeen has but himself to thank for his obstinacy. Where are you going?"

"Out. I can't stop here—do you hear the cheers of the people? I'm off."

"*Stop!*" shouted Mr. Markingham.

But I was already hurrying downstairs, and deaf to adjuration. I found crowds of people in the streets, and masses of soldiers in the squares and round the palaces; drums beating to arms, the red flags hoisted on the castles, thirty-thousand people, with the tri-color in their midst, collected in the Toledo, and shouting for the Constitution. On the balconies and at the windows there were ladies waving handkerchiefs and tri-color ribbons; facing the mob were some grim regiments of cavalry, and there was

cannon hiding round the corners of the streets.

I forced my way into the crowd and shouted with the rest. A strange excitement was upon me; here was something new and dangerous to participate in, and my life had been a dull one lately!

But the storm burst not, though it was the turning of a hair between peace and civil war. There was one faint charge of cavalry, but the horses stumbled on the lava pavement, and a few Neapolitan soldiers who had bitten the dust were raised by the people and sent back unhurt. A few more cries for King and Constitution, a few more hearty curses against the ministry of Naples, and then there were promises made by generals in the name of the King, promises even brought by the King's messengers from the palace, and then all was over, and it was "Viva il Re" again.

"Good news for Naples, Mr. Markingham," said I on my return; "the ministry has resigned."

"And so have I," replied Markingham,

sharply; "resigned all hope of seeing a wise head on those shoulders of yours. Do you know that head might have been off by this time, Hotspur?"

"General Stabella has promised us the Constitution."

"Promised *us*," repeated Markingham with emphasis; "what the devil, sir, has General Stabella or the Constitution to do with you? You are getting worse than Heberdeen, who talks high treason at the top of his lungs."

"But—"

"But I don't want to hear any of the news," said Markingham, interrupting me; "and I would give five-hundred pounds to be on my way to England."

"Well, I am ready to start, sir. Naples will soon be in its holiday dress again, and I don't care for it."

"No, we will stay till—till Heberdeen leaves. He's no more to be trusted in this inflammable country than you are."

So we remained, and saw Naples turn loyal again. The king was the best of kings and the most amiable of men; his loving

subjects showered blessings on him as he rode through the streets, and nearly tore the seats of the San Carlo up in their enthusiasm when he patronized the opera with his presence.

A few more weeks, during which Squire Heberdeen's fits of reserve set in again, then there came bad news, and fresh suspicions of Ferdinand's good faith, rumors of intrigue in court and cabinet, revolutions in Sicily, Venice, Milan, and all Lombardy, tidings of that great Paris revolution which drove a King to England for shelter, and shook, as with an earthquake, two thirds of the Continent.

It was not till May that Squire Heberdeen resolved to return to England; then the clouds were again hanging over Naples, and the people mistrusted ministers, the King, and themselves.

"Now Harriet is quite strong again," said the Squire, whom we had met by chance on the morning of Sunday; "it is time we thought of England and Ned."

"And a certain Richard Woodleigh too," observed Markingham.

The Squire laughed.

"Well, there is a fair daughter of mine who will neither be sorry to meet him," he said, "nor to leave Naples, where lovers and friends are so scarce."

"You are not without friends even in Naples, Heberdeen," said Markingham.

"Perhaps not," replied the Squire, briefly.

"And if those friends meet you in England at some future day, you will not turn the cold shoulder to them, I hope."

"Markingham," said the Squire, laying his hand upon his arm, "let me tell you frankly that friendship between us is impossible. I have attempted to keep down my dislikes, I have even tried to feel towards you as an old friend and schoolfellow—but the ghost of the lawsuit will rise up before me, and all your good qualities cannot keep it down. It warns me from your company, it points to your station and to mine, it revives constantly my past losses and anxiety. I tell you this, Markingham, on the eve of my departure, because I feel I have been often cold and unjust

towards you, have churlishly received much kindness at your hands, and I regret—"

"No apologies are requisite, Mr. Heberdeen."

"Let me thank you, then, for all favors."

"What favors?" asked Markingham, sharply.

"There, I am disturbing you," said the Squire; "I fear, too, I have pained you, but I could not leave Naples without a statement of my feelings, lest—"

He paused, and Markingham said:—

"Lest I should trouble you and your family in London. Well, you have adopted the best course, Heberdeen, and there is an end of the story. We shall not meet again, I daresay; and so, as the poets say," extending his hand, "'a long and last farewell!'"

"We do not leave till to-morrow.—I shall call once more with Harriet to say good bye."

"No, don't do that!" said Markingham, quickly.

The Squire looked surprised.

"I should be sorry to trouble Miss Heberdeen," said Markingham, "I should—in fact,

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I would prefer parting in this manner. Express unto her, if you please—or if you like," he added carelessly, "my best wishes for her health and happiness, and receive the same yourself, Heberdeen."

"Thank you."

The friends of the past shook hands together, and then Mr. Heberdeen turned towards me and shook hands likewise.

"One moment," said Markingham, after some little hesitation, "before we go our separate ways, taking the paths that are never to cross again, I fear I must offend you."

"No. We will part without ill feeling in our hearts, Markingham."

"I am about to offer you advice."

"Say on."

"It is advice that you would prefer hearing privately," said Markingham, drawing the Squire aside.

It was advice that took some time to communicate, too, and I could see the Squire's face redden once or twice, and even the eyebrows lower, as he and Markingham walked

a few paces in advance of me. It was finished at last, and I heard the Squire say as I came up with them :—

"I was certainly not prepared for such advice—I may say for such reproof."

"I said I should offend you."

"No," cried the Squire, his face brightening, "you have *not* offended me; there is no ground for your suspicion, but still it is kind of you to think of us, despite the barrier which keeps us—will ever keep us—separate. Addio."

"Is this our last meeting?" muttered Markingham, looking after the tall figure of the Squire, "does it seem natural, possible, that in another moment he will vanish from my sight for ever? Well, so much the better for him, he thinks, and—so much the better for me, *I know!*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIFTEENTH OF MAY.

Squire Heberdeen had not vanished from the sight of Stephen Markingham for ever, for late that very afternoon he and his daughter were announced as visitors.

"Not yet the last adieu, gentlemen," said the Squire, as he entered, with his daughter on his arm, "Harriet would not rest satisfied with your best wishes by proxy, Mr. Markingham."

"Mr. Markingham would have thought me most uncourteous had I been so easily satisfied," said Miss Heberdeen, offering her

hand, over which Markingham bowed gracefully.

"Partings for an indefinite period, Miss Heberdeen, are always painful, even when those who shake hands and say good bye are not the most intimate of friends."

"But we have been very intimate in Naples, Mr. Markingham," she replied, "and it would have been strange to go away and make no sign. Besides, you are one of our oldest friends, I have heard."

Squire Heberdeen had evidently not related the particulars of his late dialogue with Markingham; he looked embarrassed.

"And latest enemy also, Miss Heberdeen," answered Markingham; "but you are of the forgiving sex, in whom the remembrance of an injury does not rankle for a life-time. Your father and I are of a different stamp, and the wounds take longer healing. Am I right, Squire?"

"Yes."

"No, no," said Miss Heberdeen, her cheek flushing; "the wounds are healed, I am sure of it! My father does not bear you malice, Mr.

Markingham, for the result of that trial which made you a rich man—he has a higher mind than that."

"You are right, Miss Heberdeen," was Markingham's reply. "I have sufficient knowledge of his character to believe it. There is a difference between honest pride and malice. I understand your father, for I have often experienced his feelings."

"The subject is not a pleasant one to any of us," said the Squire—"let it cease."

Miss Heberdeen turned to me.

"Any commands for England, Mr. Woodleigh?"

"If you will remember me kindly to my cousins and my aunt, and assure them of my sympathy with their loss, I shall feel indebted, Miss Heberdeen!"

After Miss Heberdeen had replied that my message should be faithfully delivered, and a few more minutes had passed in conversation, adieus were exchanged, and the parting which Markingham had seemed to fear was over.

"Well, *now* we have seen them for the

last time, I suppose," said Markingham, "or are there to be any more meetings and partings?"

"In England, perhaps."

"Shall we ever return thither?"

"Were you not anxious to leave Naples lest an outbreak should occur?"

"I have changed my mind," said Markingham, "and after to-morrow Naples may boil over, if it likes, and if Vesuvius come in with a supplementary eruption, I shall be happy to make an excursion to the top with you."

"I thought you objected to excitement."

"So I did once," he answered, "but your restless nature has infected me. When two persons live together, the weaker mind soon gives way."

"The weaker mind," said I, laughing, —"ah! Mr. Markingham, that is some of your old irony."

"Have you ever fallen into my habits—had the ghost of a taste for the fine arts, or been sober, reflective, fond of books, or dry discussions? No, you have turned from anything steady, and gone rolling your own

way, and now, presto, I feel inclined to roll after you! Yours is the master mind, Woodleigh. Let us get into the fresh air—I have had enough of wine and tobacco-smoke."

Mr. Markingham was certainly not himself that night. He walked the streets of Naples at a rapid pace — he talked philosophy again after the old Barker Street style; he marched out of the town into the dark environs; he went down to the sea-shore and looked at the waters of the bay, twinkling in the star-light; he walked back once more into the city, the streets of which were filling fast with people.

"What's in the wind now, Woodleigh?" said Markingham, looking at his watch—"ten o'clock at night, and the streets not thinning!"

Markingham caught the next man by the sleeve as he was hurrying by, and asked if there were anything wrong in Naples.

"*No, eccellenza*—the deputies have only objected to the parliamentary oath, *eccellenza*, and they are met in the Sala di Monte

Oliveto, *eccellenza*, and—*maladizione*, he shall be too late for the news!"

Neapolitan stranger, mad as a March hare, darted away, and I said :—

"Shall we follow the stream, sir?"

"The stream sometimes leads to a sea where there are many shipwrecks," replied Markingham.

"Oh! it will be the old story—the people firm, the King wavering. There is no danger."

"*I* don't care for danger," said Markingham, "but I may be concerned for a certain headstrong young gentleman, who would shoot his own father, if he had one, for the novelty of it. However, there is set determination on his strong visage now, and I am with him. The weaker mind gives way again — anything for a change, Signor Woodleigh!"

Whether he really desired a change that night, or thought his presence might be a check on any adventurous spirit seizing me, I know not—certain it is that in less than five minutes we were in the midst of the

crowd in the Strada di Monte Oliveto—that strange turbulent crowd which was filling every street, and murmuring like a sea.

Half-past ten—eleven. Still in the streets —the deputies earnestly debating—the crowd increasing—the National Guard, the only true hearts midst the mass, sternly awaiting the result.

'*Viva il Re!*—the King gives way at last, the oath shall be modified—long live good Ferdinand of Naples!'

Twelve o'clock. Every street in Naples full of people, good news to the loving subjects of the King, whose secret orders were flying from garrison to garrison—"BRING OUT THE TROOPS!" Orders not secret enough, however, to escape quick ears; signs not hidden deep enough to deceive quick eyes — for presently the news spread that treachery was meant, and all was in ferment again.

"This will be a sad night for Naples," said Markingham; "there are faces in the crowd that mean mischief."

"They say the King has ordered out the

troops," I replied. "The coward means to break his word."

"Silence, Woodleigh," whispered Markingham; "we are not in England."

After midnight, affairs looked desperate; torches were flaring in a thousand hands, barricades were rising in the principal streets; the Toledo, Monte Oliveto, Pegnano, were blocked up; the National Guards were in arms against the King, posted at the barricades, in possession of the windows of the houses, engaged in digging trenches and pitfalls for the cavalry.

"Shall we go home?" asked Markingham.

"No."

"You are trembling and excited—this is not a pic-nic, Woodleigh."

"I will see the storm out. This way."

"Where are you going?"

"Behind the barricades—leave go my arm. Let me for once in my life do something useful."

"Is it of any use to throw away your life?"

"Is my life of value to anyone that I should set great store by it?"

"Ah! here comes the reckless devil-may-care fit on. Forward, sir, I follow you—

'Quiet to quick bosoms is a hell!'"

"I don't wish to lead you into danger, sir," said I, hesitating.

"Is my life of value to anyone?" answered Markingham in my own words; "is there anybody to miss *me* if a chance bullet send me to Hades? Hark! they are beating the *générale*—it is too late to go back now!"

Before two o'clock that morning, troops of infantry, cavalry and artillery, were in the streets, gathered in masses before the Palace, and in the open spaces facing the castle and market-place. At the barricades, undeterred by the grim mouths of cannon pointed at them, the National Guard pursued their labors, increased their means of defence, and waited for the worst. Standing in dense crowds, watching both sides of the game, were the Lazzaroni, crafty, perfidious race of

beggars and thieves, ready to sell soul and body to the highest bidder.

"The Neapolitan people hold aloof," said Markingham, when we were standing behind the barricade of Santa Brigida; "there are not a thousand of them on the side of right at present."

"They will not side with the King's troops, surely," I exclaimed.

"It is questionable," answered Markingham drily. "They are Neapolitans!"

The night passed on without a shot being fired. Ferdinand had gathered experience in Sicily, and feared the consequences that might follow the first blow. All night and all the morning, till the clocks were striking nine, messengers were passing from barricade to palace—Ferdinand began to yield, to promise the opening of parliament without the oath, to do all that was requisite for the benefit of his faithful subjects. But the barricades remained, the tri-color flag still waved, the National Guard and the people had not thinned, and the Swiss and Royal troops had come out in greater force.

"This is all parade, as it was last January," said Markingham, "and will end in nothing. Have you had enough of life at the barricades?"

"Almost."

"If we could only get home through these ranks of insurgents," said Markingham, looking round him.

"Stop," I cried; "something is the matter."

A musket had been fired, whether by accident or design is, I think, doubtful to this day, there was a rush up the barricades by the National Guard, a clattering of arms, a levelling of guns, and then the quick, sharp discharge of musketry.

"Rash, rash," muttered Markingham; "this is the beginning of an evil day for Naples. What is the date, Woodleigh?"

"The fifteenth of May, I think."

"History will remember it!"

He had hardly spoken, before the firing from the opposite side commenced in rapid and incessant volleys, and was responded to by the revolutionists. Civil war seemed

to have suddenly settled on the oppressed nation, the standard of revolt was flying, the carnage had commenced, they were already dropping dead from the barricades to my feet.

Presently the heavy boom of cannon from the King's side was added to the hum of the scene; and amidst the shouting of the thousands still neutral the war proceeded, the rattle of musketry continued, and the grape-shot plunged amongst us.

How I got there is a matter of uncertainty, but presently I was on the summit of the barricades, musket in hand, firing on the King's troops like a true patriot, the brave guard of the nation by my side, a hundred or two of Calabrians, some Frenchmen, and a few Englishmen—amateur insurgents like myself —just visible around me through the smoke.

The excitement of the scene carried away all sense of danger. I shouted for liberty, waved my hat, and fired at the Swiss hirelings, or clubbed my musket and knocked them down, as they came clambering up the barricades. Five times were the Swiss troops

beaten back at that single barricade by its resolute defenders. Had Naples been true to itself that memorable day of carnage, where would Ferdinand the Bourbon have been by this time, I wonder?

But the people, the glorious people, struck at last and—*for the king!* The promise of pillage to the lazzaroni was more substantial, more profitable than liberty, and that disgraceful promise, O Ferdinand of Naples, was made to thine eternal infamy.

Viva il Re! the mob was for the king—the royal cause was backed by countless numbers, which rushed like a sea at the defences, and like a sea was beaten back whilst powder and shot remained to the insurgents.

"Robert," cried Markingham, suddenly appearing at my side (I had not missed him for three hours), "come away. It's all over—there is no hope for Naples!"

"No hope—why not?"

"They are short of ammunition, and are retiring to the houses and the Largo del Castello; the cause is hopeless."

"Should I fly for such a reason, Markingham?"

"They will all fly presently—the day is lost. Let us descend, the National Guards set us the example. Fool-hardiness is not bravery."

I looked round. It was too true, the cause was lost. The insurgents were hurrying into the houses or making for other streets and barricades, and the soldiers and the lazzaroni were shouting and screaming like a host of demons.

"Can we reach the hotel?"

"What, gun in hand!" exclaimed Markingham; "we should soon reach the Castle of St. Elmo and the point of a Neapolitan bayonet. No, this way. Quick, before they mount the barricade."

Amidst the flying ranks of the vanquished, and with the shot whizzing past our ears, I followed Markingham through a maze of streets with which he appeared to be perfectly acquainted. Five minutes afterwards, those streets were full of the lazzaroni, burning, stealing, stabbing with the knife and bayonet

all who crossed their path, firing the houses after the spoil had been gutted from them, hurling from the windows men, women, and children into the bloody streets below.

A larger street, another barricade defended by a few hundred men sternly waiting for the royalists. As we advanced, the holders of the barricade received us, and a few of the National Guard who accompanied us, with a loud cheer.

"This must be defended to the last, Woodleigh," said Markingham; "we must strike a blow here, more for the sake of friends than liberty."

"Are the Heberdeens near?"

"Yes. Remain here while I hasten to the Squire and warn him to seek a safer place of shelter. I will return immediately."

"No heed to hasten, Markingham," said a voice close to his ear; "Heberdeen is here in person to thank you heartily for your consideration."

"What do you want here, above all men in Naples?" cried Markingham, so fiercely and

peremptorily that the Squire, astonished at his vehemence, made a backward step, and stared at him. "There is a better place for you, Squire Heberdeen."

"Where, sir?"

"By your daughter's side."

"My daughter is safe—she is already hastening to a more secure retreat."

"Good God! has she gone alone?" almost shrieked Markingham; "have you left her to wander about Naples at this awful time, whilst you idle away moments precious to her life?"

"Mr. Markingham," said Heberdeen, in his proudest manner, "I do not require to be taught a father's duty."

"Mr. Heberdeen, I ask you again, has she gone alone?" said Markingham, sternly.

Heberdeen hesitated—the new dictatorial manner of Markingham brought the color to his cheek, and for a moment his lips compressed, and the hand that held the musket trembled. It was for a moment only, then the better nature conquered, and Heberdeen grasped Markingham's hand and wrung it warmly.

"You put your questions in rough English,

Markingham," said he, "but they express an interest in my Harriet, and it is kind of you to think of her at a time when everyone seems thinking of himself. Thank you, thank you!"

"Has she gone alone?" said Markingham, for the third time.

"No. She is accompanied by two servants belonging to the house. She is going to one Damano's, a fisherman. In a time of pillage, the poorest quarters afford the safest refuge."

"Possibly," said Markingham in an absent manner.

"If the barricade remain firm for only five minutes longer, my dear daughter will be securely housed. For that five minutes I remain with this handful of brave men. I am of more service here."

"Here are the troops," cried Markingham, "and they are bringing the artillery to bear upon us. Will not five minutes see the barricade a ruin?"

"I pray not," said Heberdeen, fervently.

Shouting, blaspheming, wildly gesticulating,

came the soldiers and lazzaroni, pouring along the streets towards us, firing at the houses on each side of the way, and waging war at every threshold with those who fought for home, or wives, or children. All order was at an end ; soldiers, officers, and people were mixed together, and were even fighting amongst themselves for spoil.

There was one wild yell of rage—such as Satan may have heard in Pandemonium—at the sight of the barricade and its defenders, and then the bullets whistled through the air, and the cannon shot came crashing through the barricade.

"This is a hopeless fight, Heberdeen," said Markingham ; "the victory is for the strong, and the weak are already giving way. See! the insurgents are thinning."

"Five minutes have not passed yet," muttered the Squire.

"They are abandoning the defence," said Markingham ; "he who stays another instant is a madman."

Heberdeen gave one despairing look round him, then turned.

"Come then. It is vain to—"

The Squire stopped, staggered, put his hand to his side and fell.

"He is hit," cried Markingham, kneeling at his side and raising his head; "Heberdeen, Heberdeen, are you hurt much?"

"I fear so," he murmured faintly; "where is your hand?"

"Here."

"Raise me, if you can. I think I can —walk—a little—way. Oh! Harriet, Harriet —my poor dear, fatherless girl!"

"No, no—not so bad as that, old friend—God forbid that!" cried Markingham. "Robert, help me to raise him —we must not lose an instant now."

We lifted the wounded Squire to his feet, and hurried him away from the barricade, which some stanch hearts were still defending hopelessly.

"This street," said the Squire, indicating a narrow turning which we were about to pass, "then the third lane—at the back of the old church. I fear you must leave me, Markingham; I must give up—here!"

His head dropped, and he would have sunk to the ground again, had not our arms supported him.

"He has swooned," said Markingham; "we must carry him, Woodleigh."

As we flung away our muskets and raised him, we cast a backward glance towards the spot that had been to the Squire so fatal. They were struggling on the barricade, the victory was with the royalists, the insurgents were flying, and '*Viva il Re*!' was ringing from a thousand brazen throats.

"This is a race for life or death," said Markingham, as we hurried along with our sad burden; "if anything should happen to me, Woodleigh, you will find I have not forgotten you."

"Oh! no more of that, sir; let us hope we have seen the worst now."

"A chance shot may reduce me to poor Heberdeen's condition, and then you must fly for your own sake, for your mother's! Take care of Miss Heberdeen,—remember."

"And if you should be the survivor, sir,

will you tell that mother of mine her ungrateful boy thought of her at the last."

"Yes," said Markingham, hoarsely. "Now, quicker, Woodleigh; some of them are coming."

"No," I cried, looking behind me, "they are passing the end of the street, and making for the Square. Don't you hear how the shouting dies away?"

"They may intercept us yet," said Markingham. "This wilderness of turnings may lead us into the jaws of destruction. He said the third lane, did he not?"

"Yes—at the back of the old church."

We continued our way, a few fugitives, lighter of foot and less heavily burdened, in advance of us. One sturdy soldier of the National Guard, who had been running before us and looking occasionally in our direction, suddenly stopped and came towards us.

"Dead, Signor?" with a quick movement of his hand towards the Squire.

"No—wounded."

"Holy Madonna, how he bleeds! Wounded at the barricades?"

"Yes."

"Take his head, Signor, and let me hold his feet. So."

He suited the action to the words, and after I had taken my place by Markingham's side at the head of the Squire, we set off at a more rapid pace.

The third turning—a small old church at the corner, with a narrow squalid lane running at the back.

"This must be the street," said Markingham; "a few more minutes and we shall be safe. If Heberdeen would only speak!"

"Markingham," said the faint voice of the Squire, as if in answer, "where are we?"

"At the back of the church."

"Keep on to—"

"To where?" said Markingham. "For Harriet's sake, try and tell us, Heberdeen!"

"To the end of the street, where the—nets are hanging. The—fifth—house—from—the end."

Heberdeen's head dropped on his chest again.

"If we could only find a surgeon," mur-

mured Markingham, "all might be well yet."

The lane appeared deserted by our species. The doors and windows of every house were open, and only a few dogs growled at us as we passed. As we splashed our way through mud and stagnant water, the noise in the distant streets died gradually away, and a low murmur but sounded in the distance, broken at irregular intervals by the heavy boom of cannon, which roused the echoes of the place, and set the dogs barking in the wretched homes they guarded.

"I must prepare *her* now," muttered Markingham—"follow as slowly as you can, and give me time. The fifth house—the name Damano."

Markingham resigned his charge, and ran towards the house wherein Miss Heberdeen had sought shelter from the storm. I watched him as we followed in his footsteps, saw him knock at a door at the end of the street, stand a moment, and then knock again. Presently he was admitted, and almost at the same moment, a man, bare-

headed, bare-footed, rushed from the house and tore off in an opposite direction.

Before we reached the house, Heberdeen raised his head again and said:—

"Markingham."

"Mr. Markingham has gone to prepare your daughter for the accident, Mr. Heberdeen."

"It is kind—of—him!"

The head began to droop again.

"The worst is over now, Sir, and we shall soon have a doctor to attend you. Mr. Markingham has already sent for one."

The Squire made no answer.

Before the house, one step from the street into the low dusky room, where there were two children, four women, and Mr. Markingham. Three women were together, two young ones and an old dark-faced crone — and the fourth, Miss Heberdeen, was standing in the centre of the room, her hands clasped together, a wild look in her eyes, a deathlike whiteness in her face. Markingham was close beside her.

"My dear Miss Heberdeen," I heard him

say, "I must trust to you not to give way. It may be fatal to your father."

"I will try, sir," she answered, her hands locking together more rigidly, "I will—do—my best!"

As we placed the wounded Squire on a litter of clothes which had been hurriedly thrown on the floor for his reception, the daughter slowly sank in a crouching position by the father's side, and gazed anxiously—how anxiously!—into his face.

"Father," she murmured—"father, do you know me?"

The eyes opened.

"Oh! Harriet, this is a sad day for you, girl."

"Don't speak, father—you must keep quiet, very quiet—see how calm I am!"

"Brave girl!"

"The doctor will be here almost directly."

"I shall not need one."

"Oh! don't say that," cried Miss Heberdeen, "you will soon be well again, father, I am sure you will. You are but slightly

hurt, and when the doctor comes—good God, how long he is!"

"Miss Heberdeen," adjured Markingham, "your promise!"

"Harriet, dear," said the Squire, "the bullet that struck me down was God's message. His will, remember—to be done on earth as in Heaven! Where is—Markingham?"

"Here," said Markingham.

"You are an old friend," said he, clutching eagerly at the hand which Markingham extended to him—"you will be a friend to her?"

"You may trust me."

"You will see her safe to England, and place her in her brother's charge? Oh! Markingham, you will take care of her in her loneliness?"

"As though she were my daughter."

"God bless you—for—that!" he murmured, releasing Markingham's hand. "Harriet, where are you?"

"At your side, father," sobbed the daughter —"don't you see me?"

"It—is—very—dark," he answered.

When his daughter's hand lay clasped in his, he said:—

"Tell Ned to remember me sometimes—his father who was so proud of him! Oh! my dear boy, if I could but see him once again, I wouldn't care for dying. What noise is that?"

The door opened, and the fisherman, accompanied by a spare, lame old gentleman, came into the room.

Markingham went towards the old gentleman and whispered a few words to him; but she who had been so anxious for his coming turned not her head, even appeared unconscious of his presence. When he was kneeling on the other side, his hand upon the pulse of the dying man, she took no heed, and when he muttered in Italian, "Too late," there was but a faint shivering as with cold.

The Squire spoke again; how faint the voice was then!

"Harriet, you are very young to be left in the world alone; the Father of all watch over you, keep evil from you, instruct your heart aright—good bye!"

"No, no, no, dear father, not good-bye," passionately cried his daughter, "not to leave me alone without a friend, without a hope in this benighted land. Oh!" looking wildly round her, "is there no one here to help him?"

"Hush, girl," said Heberdeen, "you disturb me."

In an instant she sat motionless by his side, his hand clasped between her own.

"Kiss me now, and say—good-bye."

"Good-bye!"

"When you were a little girl at Nettleton," he murmured, "you used to say, kneeling at your mother's feet, a simple prayer—and yet a prayer so sweet and earnest that God's angels must have listened—will you say it once again? I should—so—like—to hear it!"

With her father's hand still clasped between her own, she knelt and prayed for sinners, and we stood, with bowed heads, listening.

When the last word was uttered, she who had prayed fell to the ground, and burying her face in her hands, sobbed out with all the passionate intensity of woman:—

"Dead, dead!"

"*Madre di Dio!*" whispered the fisherman, as he advanced and looked over my shoulder at the lifeless form of poor Heberdeen; "the Signora is right!"

CHAPTER V.

HOME.

THE day following the revolt, which Ferdinand had quelled with the strong hand, five ships of the French squadron sailed for Civita Vecchia, having on board three thousand fugitives from Naples.

Mr. Markingham and I remained in the city, dangerous abode as it was for anyone of liberal opinions. We had sad duties to perform, a fair girl prostrate with fever to watch over, an old friend to consign to his grave in foreign soil.

It was the end of May before Miss Heberdeen was better, and during the time that elapsed before her convalescence the true

nature of Markingham developed itself. Twenty times a-day, at least, he went from his hotel to her apartments to make enquiry concerning her, and to give orders that her lightest wish was not to be neglected. When she was better and could quit her room, it was his arm on which she leaned, it was his voice that sought to console her for her loss. He was as gentle and thoughtful as a woman, and he took the father's place by her side, as though it were his right.

She was not anxious to leave Naples—even the names of her brother and lover, which Markingham essayed at times, when she lay prostrate with grief, did not rouse her; weak in body and depressed in mind, it seemed as if it were fated that the beautiful girl should find her resting-place by the side of her father.

"She is not strong," said Markingham, to me; "every street in Naples is full of sad associations—every day longer here is a step nearer her grave."

"Poor girl, she has seen much sorrow in her young life."

"And if God spare her, she will see more."

"Surely the worst is over."

Markingham shook his head.

"She has lost mother and father—will not the lover come next?" he said.

"I do not know enough of Richard Woodleigh to answer that question."

"We shall know enough some day."

Early in June, when Naples was disturbed again, when Ferdinand was troubled for his life, and feared some stealthy hand might put an end to it and to the affliction under which Naples suffered—and is suffering still, unhappy kingdom of the South!—Markingham's endeavors to persuade Miss Heberdeen to leave Italy had, at last, their effect.

"I am in your hands, Mr. Markingham," she said; "it matters little to me which country I am in, I fear."

"You have a dear friend in England."

"Yes, he must be expecting me, poor Ned. You wrote to him, sir?"

"Some weeks since."

"Name the day for departure, and I will be prepared. It is a selfish sorrow of mine, that

keeps you from *your* friends, Mr. Markingham."

"Where are they, Miss Heberdeen?"

"One is with you—at your side," she answered; "you will let me call you friend?—you who have been so kind, so good to me!"

"I desire no greater honor."

"You were my poor father's friend once—my mother's too, I think, sir."

"Yes."

"A few days before—before he died," she said, with an effort, "my father spoke of you—regretted that his pride and position would not suffer him to renew the past intimacy."

"Did he say anything more?—did he tell you the story of two school-fellows becoming rivals for one maiden, of the elder winning her for a wife?"

"He told me all, sir."

"I am glad of that—it is a story I have long wished you to know."

After that dialogue, the friendship between Miss Heberdeen and Mr. Markingham made rapid progress. She placed a daughter's

confidence in him, and he regarded her with all a father's reverence.

Leaving behind for ever the troubled nation and the false Bourbon, we started at last for England, fortunate in having escaped the dungeon or the knife—a fate which befell many more innocent than ourselves in that land where Might still sets its foot on Right and keeps it in the dust.

Is the judgment yet to fall on Ferdinand? —is the day to come when Liberty shall cast aside its fetters, and in its fearful struggle for the light, affright the crowned coward from his throne? I believe the day *will* come for Naples yet. There is a law of retributive justice for nations as for men.

We touched the shores of England in the fair summer time. What a welcome to the wanderer did the white cliffs of my native land seem to smile! We three travellers looked at each other and said "Home!" as we stood on English ground, and with all my natural discontent, I felt grateful to see English faces looking into mine—to hear the voice of the Saxon ringing in my ears.

In London at last, standing outside the railway station, the busy world around us; cabmen and 'busmen trying to catch our eye, the evening papers tendered us, books of puffing tailors thrust into our hands, nondescript individuals touching napless hats and offering their services to fetch and carry anything, travellers, outward bound, passing us in a state of great excitement, the world of workers streaming on its way, two years ago seeming but two short minutes, or the beginning of a dream from which we had awakened.

"You go to your mother's, Woodleigh?" said Markingham.

"Yes—at once."

"I have to resign the charge of Miss Heberdeen into her brother's hands," said Markingham—"will you meet me at Morley's in the evening?"

Having answered in the affirmative, I prepared to take leave of Miss Heberdeen.

"We are old friends now, Mr. Woodleigh," said she, as her small hand rested in mine—"past events have rendered us no

longer strangers to each other. You must come and see my brother Edmund soon."

I thanked Miss Heberdeen, promised to call with Mr. Markingham, and then I parted from her, thinking how pale she looked again, and how the roses that were blooming on her cheeks in Christmas past had all vanished with the summer!

Dismissing the cab, which had borne me westward a few streets from my mother's home, I walked slowly towards the house wherein the last parting had taken place. There was a print-shop in the route, and I remember pausing before it and gazing, with a few London stragglers, through its windows, my heart beating strangely all the while. So close to her home, I thought, and to the mother who wept upon my shoulder nearly two years ago, and bade God bless me! I was anxious to see her, and yet I lingered; for four months I had received no news of her, and for six months my idle fingers had not set pen to paper. There were engravings of Mr. Bowden in the window—signs of the popularity he had achieved since my departure—

and I remember surveying them without much feeling of surprise;—it seemed quite in the regular way, and a thing to be expected.

Before the house at last—my heart still beating at an unwonted rate. The maid-servant who responded to my knock was a stranger, and to my question, "Is Mrs. Bowden within?" she stared at me in a bewildered manner, and gave no answer.

Before I could repeat the question, the door of the front room opened, and a lady of slight figure, dressed in black, came into the hall.

"Mr. Woodleigh!" she exclaimed.

"Miss Bowden!"

"My father's letter?" she asked anxiously, "the last one, directed to the Hotel Vittoria, Naples—it reached you?"

"No."

"Pray come in, Mr. Woodleigh."

I followed her into the room; there was another well-known figure at the table, bending over an open Bible—my step-father, looking very old and grey, but there was no one else—*oh! no one else!*

END OF THE SIXTH BOOK.

BOOK VII.

"I mean to enjoy the world and to draw out my life at the wire-drawer's, not to curtail it off at the cutler's."

JOHN LYLY.

"'My birth-day,' what a diff'rent sound
That word had in my youthful ears!
And how, each time the day comes round,
Less and less white its mark appears."

MOORE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD LIFE.

Before the summer was over, the old life had begun again. So even and monotonous a life, in a country so matter-of-fact and business-like, that revolutions and hand-to-hand fights at barricades seemed matters of history with which the nineteenth century had no connection.

Yes, the old life had begun again, and all those restless feelings which made my nature sometimes a mystery to myself, which had preyed upon me at home and abroad, and had never left me since my boyhood, increased with every day.

I felt alone in the world after my mother's

death, for although that mother had never been studied and loved as she deserved, yet she had been my best friend and comforter; I knew it when it was too late!

I did not even bear my loss patiently, take my share of the world's affliction with bowed head, thinking it was best; I raved over my sorrows, I gave way for a time to an extravagance of grief that was akin to the ridiculous, and then I turned sullen, and affected a callousness to everything, which was rather over-done, though it realized my most miserable expectations.

I did not visit Grove House, Paddington, after my return to England—'They didn't want to see me!' I called not at the warehouses in the Edgeware Road—'Upton Woodleigh would be too busy now to care about his cousin!' I wrote not to Tom Arrow—'What did it matter to him whether I were alive or dead?' I sought not my new friend, Richard Woodleigh—'If he wanted me, he would find *me* out!' I kept away from my step-father—'He was a great preacher, and I hated powerful sermons!'

I was most content shut up in Mr. Markingham's library amongst the books I never opened, or walking the streets at a pace that suggested to observers a search for a policeman, a doctor, or a fire engine.

Secretly, I had my objections to Mr. Markingham's behavior; he did not appear to study me so much, or to care a great deal whether I were in or out of temper. He was always thinking of the children of him whom we had left sleeping in Naples, or speaking of the son who had inherited his father's pride, and who, although softened by Markingham's past kindness to his sister, yet hung back from any great exhibition of friendship. The law-suit stood between Markingham and the son, as it had between Markingham and the father—the Heberdeens were an unforgetful race.

Still, there was an intimacy between them —there was no avoiding it. Miss Heberdeen —unforgetful too—remembered the day of her father's death, and Markingham's patience, gentleness, and forethought during her long illness which succeeded it, and she could but welcome him as an old and valued friend.

Young Heberdeen and his sister accepted at last an invitation to Mr. Markingham's house in May Fair—an invitation which had been pressed upon them several times. I was anxious to absent myself from home on the appointed day, and expressed a wish to that effect.

"For what reason, Woodleigh?"

"I don't know. I don't care about seeing them. I have an objection to company."

"Company!" said Markingham. "Miss Heberdeen and her brother 'company!' Why, Woodleigh, it will be a change for you."

"I don't want a change."

"It is time you dropped that fretful series of 'don'ts,' Woodleigh."

"Mr. Heberdeen is no friend of mine."

"But your cousin Richard is, and he will possibly favor us with his presence."

"Have you written to him, sir?"

"No; I met him at Coram Street, a few evenings since, and gave him an informal invitation."

"I don't want to see him."

"Don't again!" exclaimed Markingham.

"My dear Woodleigh, how captious you are! Come, you dine with us all next Thursday—I ask it as a favor."

"Very well, sir."

I gave in ungraciously enough, although I was ready with Mr. Markingham, on the appointed afternoon, to receive the looked-for guests. They came, and I turned first to him who had stolen Constance Woodleigh's heart. Two years had altered him more perhaps than they had altered me; he was no longer the youth, but the man of two-and-twenty. A handsome man, too—there was no denying that; his face was somewhat sallow, but there was a peculiar earnestness of expression on it which attracted even me.

He was not at his ease when he entered, and he shook hands with Mr. Markingham and me in an embarrassed manner. Doubtless it was a strange position for him to stand as a guest beneath the roof of the man who had become rich by his family's ruin, and that thought seemed to trouble him all the evening, despite his efforts to shake it off. Mr.

Markingham did not see, or feigned not to see, the occasional flashing of the Heberdeen pride, but I, who sat next him, had many opportunities of observing it. Once, being at a loss for a topic, I made an allusion to Nettleton, but I found it was dangerous ground to entrench on.

"We have done with Nettleton, Mr. Woodleigh," said he, drawing himself up stiffly—"I would prefer dismissing the subject, with your permission."

"Certainly," was my answer; "I have no desire to prolong it."

Seeing me frown a little at the rebuff, he made an effort to be gracious, spoke of my cousins and aunt at Grove House, and asked if I had heard from them since my return to London.

"Not yet, Mr. Heberdeen," I replied.

"Upton often expresses his surprise that he has not seen you."

"He should come to May Fair, then," said I, with a short laugh; "I am always at home."

"Having the entire management of a large

business on his hands, his time is much occupied," said Heberdeen; "you forget that."

"Has Mr. Richard Woodleigh no interest in that business?"

"Not any," said Heberdeen, glancing across the table at his friend; "Richard Woodleigh prefers the pleasures of life to the cares of state. What a frank, easy, good-hearted-fellow *he* is!"

"Is he?"

"Contented with everything, and happy as a king. I used to fancy he would turn out an extravagant being, but how he has altered! I wish that same virtue of content had been a little more developed in me, for all my lessons from a gentle sister don't keep my temper down."

"May I ask what leads you to suppose my cousin Richard is of so amiable a disposition, Mr. Heberdeen?"

"Has he not lately exhibited a striking proof of the art of taking the ills of life with composure? Does he look as if he felt his losses acutely?"

"What losses?"

"Has he not told you?"

"My cousin and I meet again to-night for the first time."

"Ah! I had forgotten that. Well, you must wait for his confession—I may be betraying confidence."

I had not long to wait; later in the evening, when Heberdeen and his sister were conversing with Mr. Markingham, cousin Dick came to my side of the table.

"Well, Robert, you have not troubled us much lately."

"Have you missed me, Richard, at Grove House?"

"*They* have, I believe; they often talk of you, which is a sign the absent one is not forgotten, eh?"

"Did you forget me, then?"

"No, I did not," said Dick, "but I took the offence and said to myself, 'here's a friend and relation—who professed an attachment to me in Naples, and played Pythias to my Damon there—has returned to England, and does not exert himself to make the slightest inquiry concerning me.' I was hurt, Robert."

"I have had my trials to bear, and my heart has not felt light enough to seek out the old friends, since the death of my mother."

"Trials!" said Dick; "and have I not had my share? By Jove, I have had nothing but trials myself. Do you remember your first visit to Grove House?"

"Yes."

"Who was the favorite son then, Robert—the hope of the family, the pride of father, mother, and sisters?"

"I should say, Richard Woodleigh."

"What should you say then to Richard Woodleigh having been left two hundred a-year, payable in quarterly instalments, out of a business that puts three times as many thousands into the pockets of a younger brother."

"Is it credible?"

"I find it so. And I find all my hopes thrown to the ground by a Will that must have been written when my father was suffering from temporary derangement. He was always very strange and excitable, if you remember."

"At times."

"You don't remember anything very eccentric or extraordinary in his manner during the time you were his clerk, Robert?"

"I do not."

Richard Woodleigh looked disappointed.

"You must have quarrelled with the old gentleman," I said.

"We had a few words about the college business—trumpery affair, that it was—but was that sufficient to cut me off with two hundred a-year?"

"What does Upton think of it?"

"In my opinion, Robert, he is very glad to get the lion's share. He has been as important as a judge ever since, and as I don't like his manner, I see very little of him."

"It is certainly singular that you should have been left only two hundred a-year—and no reason alleged for it in the Will."

"Depend upon it, the old gentleman was mad. I have always had my doubts—have told you of them frequently."

"This is the first time you have mentioned them to me, Richard."

"No, it is not," he replied sharply, "only

your memory plays you false. However, it is ended, and I am a gentleman with limited means."

"Heberdeen tells me you are as happy as a king."

"Oh! yes—I take things as I find them. What can't be cured must be endured, Woodleigh. I find a few friends—a certain brother and sister—look down upon me, but that is natural enough."

"Look down upon you!—nonsense!"

"My dear Robert, it is a cruel fact. If it were not for the affection of my mother, of Constance and the young ones, I should never cross the threshold of Grove House."

"Are you not living at Paddington?"

"No; in bachelor quarters—here's my card, you must call and see me. What day shall we say?—Friday?"

"That is to-morrow."

"The sooner the better. You and I ought to be the best of friends—our natures are so similar."

"You will find that statement hard to prove, Richard."

"Not at all. We are both fellows of deep feeling, fond of society, impulsive, perhaps a little headstrong. Now Heberdeen, a very good fellow in his way, don't suit me exactly. He has turned too careful since his engagement to Constance, and prides himself upon being firm, and all that rubbish. You'll come to-morrow?"

"Thank you—I will."

"Well said. You and I have plenty of time on our hands—why should we not spend it together?"

"You are forgetting Miss Heberdeen, Richard."

"Oh! no. I have my certain lover's days, but they do not usurp all my leisure."

"What does Miss Heberdeen think of the difference between Upton and yourself?"

"My dear fellow, I never said there was a difference. Ostensibly, we are the best of friends. We do not want the world to talk about us—it's 'my dear Upton,' 'my dear Dick,' when we meet, and Upton always shakes hands with me very heartily, although he wishes me a hundred miles off. I see

through him though, and I hate hypocrisy!"

"I cannot fancy my cousin Upton a hypocrite, Richard."

"He's an artful fellow, and would deceive anybody. He deceived you once, remember," he said, in a lower tone.

"Deceived me!"

"He pretended to be your friend, didn't he?" said Dick, lightly; "and the sly young rascal was setting Caroline on you all the time—causing her to keep you and Constance apart.—Ha! ha! to do him justice, he's sharp enough. But there's my lady-love looking thoughtfully at us, and wondering what our long conversation has been about—so amen to it. We shall meet to-morrow, and then we can talk of our troubles,—and laugh at them."

Thus was my intimacy with Richard Woodleigh renewed—strengthened.

We met on the Friday, on the Saturday; we rode out on horseback together on the Sunday. Heberdeen was quite right, he *was* "a frank, easy, good-hearted fellow!"

That is a strange and valuable power—the art of winning upon the heart or fancy of the stranger; of detecting in one meeting what topics, arguments, pleasures, are best to dilate on. Richard Woodleigh was the only being of my acquaintance possessed of the power in a great degree—who used that power, I regret to say, to his own advantage, seldom for a good end, never without a purpose. I could scarce believe he was the same Richard Woodleigh whom I had disliked so long; the same man who grumbled at his fate one Sunday afternoon—or played the part of a grumbler—and borrowed seventy pounds of his younger brother. Only one trait of his character he had not the ability to disguise, and that peeped out in all his impersonations—namely, the very good opinion he entertained of himself. He was a handsome man, and therefore it was a natural weakness enough. Was there ever a good-looking fellow who was not egotistical?

Mr. Markingham even, shrewd observer as he was, could not always defend himself from the fascinations of Dick Woodleigh, for Dick could talk politics and philosophy, and knew

all about the books which were Mr. Markingham's favorites. Still, Markingham was full of his warnings to me, and still studied Dick Woodleigh at every opportunity.

Richard Woodleigh had a delicate part to play with Edmund Heberdeen, and was anxious at first to make him also my friend; he arranged meetings between us at his rooms, and planned little riding and fishing excursions that brought us together, but there was no increase of esteem—our natures were too opposite. Dick gave up the attempt at last.

"It's no use," said he to me one day; "Heberdeen and you will never be the friends I could wish."

"I am not anxious to cultivate his acquaintance."

"I think he gets prouder than ever," said Dick; "and Count Heberdeen was always of the peacock species. I can manage him well enough, but most people would find the task a difficult one. His sister sees wonderful improvements in him — *I* don't. Perhaps his improved position under Government helps to make him important. He looks

forward to being a married man next year, I believe."

"So soon?"

"Constance will be twenty-one in March."

"In February."

"Oh! February, is it—what a good memory you have!"

"Will he be able to support a wife next year then?" I asked.

"Yes. At the Squire's death, the little property left — some two or three hundred a year, I believe—had to be divided between him and his sister; and he thinks his share, added to his clerk's salary, will suffice to begin the world as Benedict."

"Don't you think so?"

"Well, he has turned very mean—taken to saving money, and all that nonsense—perhaps it will. There's Constance's marriage portion too—he will not be so badly off, after all."

"Miss Heberdeen will become Mrs. Woodleigh on the same happy day, I presume?"

"I suppose so," replied Dick; "yet I am of an extravagant turn of mind—how will the money last, I wonder!"

"Mr. Heberdeen tells me you have turned very steady."

"I can't tell the brother of my future wife everything," said Dick, "especially since he has taken to preaching against his past recklessness. Money will make to itself wings, though."

"True enough."

"I could make a fortune my own way, if I had only a hundred pounds to back a first-rate speculation," said Dick, looking on the ground and biting his nails; "but I can't ask Heberdeen, and Upton, my own brother—he'd see me dead before he lent it me!"

"I think I can lend you a hundred pounds, Dick, for a month or two."

"My dear Robert, a thousand thanks; but I could not think of borrowing your money—though I should be safe to pay it back again. You are very kind; I shall not easily forget the frankness of the offer."

He wrung my hand; the tears of gratitude were swimming in his large dark eyes. How could I forbear to press him to borrow that money I could so easily spare? I did

press him, and, after a long struggle, he accepted the loan, wrung my hand again, and said :—

"He had found a true friend at last—one who should, from that day, take the first place in his heart—God bless him!"

CHAPTER II.

WARNINGS.

THE affection I had suddenly evinced for Dick Woodleigh left me no time to think of other friends and acquaintances. I forgot them all, threw them aside for the new and the false. I saw life with Dick Woodleigh; I placed myself under his guidance, and was glad to find scope for my restlessness in the round of pleasure before me.

Mr. Markingham made little comment on my frequent absence from home; he shrugged his shoulders, and thought it was better than my past fits of the horrors. Sometimes he warned me of Dick Woodleigh, but he did not

attempt to sever our dangerous intimacy—was, in fact, rather anxious to see more of him.

"Why does he not come to May Fair if he be so attached to you?" he would say sometimes; "friends of Robert Woodleigh are always friends of mine."

And cousin Dick never came to May Fair but Mr. Markingham was at home to receive him, and invariably in the most gracious of moods. At those times, Mr. Markingham's style of conversation—light, flippant, and volatile—surprised me not a little. He talked of the pleasures of life with a zest that would have been more creditable from the lips of a younger man, expounded questionable doctrines, and asked Dick Woodleigh's opinion on them, was cynical, over his wine, concerning honor and virtue, laughed heartily at the jests of my cousin, and listened with a flattering intentness to every word that fell from his lips.

"Mr. Markingham has been a wild dog in his day," Dick once said to me; "has seen as much life as the best of us, or else,"

added he, shrewdly, "wishes you or I to believe so."

Dick was evidently suspicious of Mr. Markingham's attentions, although their object —if they embraced one—naturally puzzled him. He did not readily respond to my patron, even secretly irritated him by taking opposite views of human nature, and preaching on moral subjects with an energy worthy of Mr. Bowden.

And Mr. Bowden, still mourning for the loss of her I was learning to forget, how was I neglecting him? I avoided the house wherein my mother had died, as though it were unhallowed ground—I could not stand in the rooms she had inhabited and not feel myself unworthy of her,—and I shunned him who had been to that mother the best of husbands.

I had never listened to the narrative of my mother's death; I knew not by whose side she had died, or in what manner—I did not wish to pain myself and others with the sad story, and as for my mother's last words, I could guess what *they* were! I had no

curiosity to know the reason for Miss Bowden's sudden appearance at her father's side, cared not to learn who was the first to give way,—the strange, stern father—or the stranger, sterner daughter.

Yet Mr. Bowden sought me out with a pertinacity equal to that with which I avoided him, wrote me invitations that I never accepted, called at May Fair whenever his duties allowed him. Some two months passed away before we met, however, before he sat opposite me in Mr. Markingham's drawing-room and preached a sermon that struck home to me. Time and care, which had made my step-father old and grey, had softened in a remarkable degree his natural asperity; there was less fierceness in his discourse, and more willingness to listen to the discourse of others. He appeared to have inherited some of my mother's gentleness with the sorrows occasioned by her loss, and there was some difficulty in reconciling the present Mr. Bowden with the unfortunate recipient of the blue and yellow shepherdess.

I listened patiently to his sermon, though I

objected to many of its heads, but when he began to talk of my mother I started wildly to my feet.

"No, Mr. Bowden," I cried; "I cannot hear of her—I am fully sensible of the bad son I have been, and know that I merit all her reproaches."

"She did not reproach you, Robert."

"Her blessing is a reproach to me, for I am undeserving of it—I who could have made her life so happy! Mr. Bowden, it is very kind to trouble yourself about me—"

"I promised *her*—"

"But you do me no good," I continued, not heeding his interruption; "you revive a past that I am striving to forget!"

"Ah! Robert, to forget in what manner?"

I did not answer.

"If you would only call at my house now and then," he entreated, "I should be very glad to see you, and you would be fulfilling the wishes of a dying mother. There, don't pace the room so violently, I will not urge the request now—some other time, when you

are more master of yourself. I believe we should be the best of friends; why not you and I, as well as I and my daughter?"

"Some other time, then," I replied, anxious to close the interview.

"*She* has come back since your—my poor wife's death," he corrected, "has taken the daughter's place at last. We have talked so much of the past, of our old failings, passions, weaknesses,—of that which tended to sunder us,—that it has made both more thoughtful and considerate. Oh! Robert," added he, earnestly, "you should not try to forget the past—it is the memory of it, the lessons which it teaches, that make us wiser, better men."

"Well, I will talk over the past with you some day—not now."

"That is a promise," said Mr. Bowden, quickly; "I must see you do not break it. What day shall we say?"

"Leave it to me, Mr. Bowden."

"I suppose I must," said he, rising reluctantly; "but don't put it off altogether, for I am not one to allow that. I have your

promise, remember, and if you will not seek me out, why," for the first time during the interview, *bang* came his heavy hand upon the table, "I will seek you out, depend upon it!"

He colored a little at his vehemence, and said with a faint smile:—

"You see my old impetuosity has not quite departed, Robert. Even a minister of the Gospel loses his self-command at times, and I have been subject to such weakness all my life. However, it is not too late to learn; —had I learned the lesson of forbearance earlier, what a deal of trouble might have been spared me!"

It was a novelty to hear Mr. Bowden reproaching himself—certainly time had improved him. His popularity as a preacher had rendered him less dogmatic and opinionated, and that is not the general result of popularity, is it, O ye laurel-crowned?

Mr. Bowden gave me one more warning.

"Robert," said he, "neither seeing the world, nor experiencing a great loss in it, appears to have cured you of your reigning

fault; I don't believe the life you are following ever will—it is not an earnest, hard-working life enough. May I ask you—or from my lips may your mother ask you—to be careful whom you choose for a friend? You do not know what a deal depends upon it."

He was turning to depart, when the friend I had chosen, Richard Woodleigh, came, with a friend's privilege, unsummoned into the room.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Robert," said he, "Mr. Markingham told me you were alone."

He bowed to Mr. Bowden, and made a movement to withdraw.

"Don't go, Richard," I said—"I shall be disengaged in one minute. This is Mr. Woodleigh, sir," to Mr. Bowden, "a cousin of mine."

Mr. Bowden literally jumped. He was right in his recent remark that he was still liable to lose his self-command, for he changed color, clenched his hands, and looked at Richard Woodleigh with eyes full of passion.

"Richard, you called him—Richard Woodleigh?"

"Yes," I answered, glancing at my friend, whose color had also changed, and whose eyes seemed to flinch a little, despite the attempt they made to meet the fierce looks of my step-father.

"Richard Woodleigh," repeated Mr. Bowden, drawing his breath with difficulty, "and is that man *your* friend?"

"I have the honor to be considered Mr. Robert Woodleigh's friend, sir," remarked my cousin.

"I addressed myself to this young man, sir," said Mr. Bowden, indicating me with his hand—"I may address you presently!"

Richard Woodleigh bowed again.

"If *he* be your friend, Robert," said Mr. Bowden, sternly, "my efforts for your welfare are in vain, and I have done with you. A falser man, or one more cruel and designing, you could not have chosen in the world—I can but say, God help you!"

"This is serious, Mr. Bowden," cried Dick Woodleigh; "will it please you to explain this charge against my character?"

"Character! you have none, sir," cried Mr.

Bowden, furiously. "You are a villain—more, you are a coward!"

"Your age and your profession only shield your insolence, sir," said Dick, coolly.

"Some months since I made a sacred promise, which, though it hinder me from laying bare your villainy, does not prevent me warning Robert Woodleigh to beware of you. Robert," turning to me, "is my warning taken?"

"I cannot throw aside my friend without a reason," I answered; "that would not be justice, Mr. Bowden."

"I say he is not to be trusted, that he is no fit friend for any man of principle; I don't think, Robert, you have ever heard me lie!"

"No, sir, but—"

"That will do," said Mr. Bowden gravely —"spare me the humiliation of hearing the son of my poor wife excuse the base and worthless. I wish to hear no more."

Mr. Bowden retired with some dignity, and Dick Woodleigh burst into a hearty laugh.

"Is he mad, Robert?"

"Not in the least."

"Surely his success as a red-hot Methodist has turned his head."

"What did he mean about a sacred promise, Dick?" I asked.

"I don't know; it was no sacred promise to me, at any rate."

"Can you imagine a reason for his violence?"

"No."

I took Richard Woodleigh's word, although I had doubted Mr. Bowden's; but the former was my friend, in whom I had confidence! Cousin Dick might be heedless and headstrong —but there was no harm in him—not the least.

So I disregarded the warning of my stepfather—had he not often warned me before? —and went my own way in life, arm-in-arm with Dick Woodleigh.

CHAPTER III.

MORE WARNINGS.

One bright Autumn morning, early in October, Dick Woodleigh and I, inseparable friends, were strolling leisurely through Kensington Gardens. It was a strange place for us to select, Dick Woodleigh not being a lover of Nature or nursery-maids, and preferring, in the raw hours before mid-day, a quiet game at billiards, in which art my cousin had been at some pains to instruct me, had even introduced me to a few friends of his, who had instructed me too, and won my money in a very gentlemanly manner. But Richard Woodleigh,

that particular morning, was not in the humor for billiards, and proposed, with a yawn, a walk before luncheon; and, the walk having been extended, we arrived, whether by accident or design matters not, at the fair gardens of Kensington.

"Let us have another stroll down this avenue, Robert," said my cousin, when I had begun to exhibit some symptoms of weariness; "this is a favorite haunt of mine when a poetical fit attacks me."

"Which is not very often."

"More often than you think," said Dick; "for I was always of a reflective, sentimental turn. Are you in a hurry?"

"No."

"Then don't walk so fast, there's a good fellow; that late supper of yours last night has nearly knocked me up."

I suited my pace to his own, and listened to Richard Woodleigh's conversation, which, that morning, was decidedly dull and insipid. At the end of the walk, Dick paused and looked round him.

"Shall we return home?" I asked.

"I am at your service," he said; "my fit of rurality is over, and now for any life in London which suits your inclination best. One moment, Robert; surely we ought to know those ladies in mourning."

"Yes, yes, I know them," said I, hastily disengaging my arm from my cousin's, "and it will be as well for me to retire."

"For what reason?" asked Dick; "surely you are not afraid of meeting your friends and relations."

"I have kept away so long, Richard, that I have not the courage to face them now."

"It's too late—they have seen us and there is no escape for you, old fellow," said Dick; "make the best of it, Robert, it's not such a dreadful thing to face an old sweetheart."

"Not very dreadful," I answered with a sickly smile; "I have faced worse dangers in Naples."

Dick Woodleigh and I advanced towards the ladies, and I could not help experiencing a certain amount of nervousness as the distance grew less between me and those whom I had sought to forget.

We were face to face at last, and I was shaking hands with my aunt and cousins, and hoping they were well.

My aunt was looking as pale and thin as ever, and if time and trouble had not added to her weakness, they had, at least, increased her nervousness, for even the sudden meeting with her son and nephew was a shock to her which caused her to cling hastily to the arms of her daughters.

"Oh! Dick, my dear lad, I was not prepared to meet you this morning—what a fright you have given me! Has anything happened?"

"Happened, mother,—no. Robert and I have been strolling here to kill time, that is all."

"And can it be really you, Robert? What a difference two years make in a growing lad, to be sure. Only two years ago since—ahem!"

"I did not expect to find you walking in Kensington Gardens, aunt," I remarked.

"Your cousins *will* bring me into the fresh air, Robert," said my aunt, "although it's

against my will. I would rather stay at home."

"You give way too much, mother," said Dick, "and that will never do. Come, girls, talk to your cousin and leave mother to me—how do you think time has served these young ladies, Robert?"

"I see little difference in them," I replied, looking from Caroline to Constance, and from Constance to my youngest cousin, Mary—"except in Mary here. I left her a child, I find her budding into womanhood."

Mary blushed as we strolled together down the avenue, Aunt Woodleigh a few yards in advance, leaning on Dick's arm.

Constance Woodleigh betrayed no want of self-possession during our meeting—she was as calm and lady-like as her elder sister. That day, in the summer time, when I had proposed to her in the very face of despair, was a day to be forgotten, and she could welcome me now with a bright smile, knowing all misconceptions were ended.

"And you have never called at Grove House since your return from the Continent,"

said Constance; "was it your intention, cousin Robert, to forget all your relations?"

"Surely not," I answered; "and to find me with your brother Richard is sufficient answer to the question."

"Richard has been speaking of you lately," said Caroline; "telling us of the friendship that has sprung up between you and him. Things come strangely round, Robert. I used to fancy once you would be my brother Upton's friend."

"Upton thought so too," added Mary.

"He is well, I hope," I asked coldly, for I remembered Dick's assertion that he had helped to deceive me.

"Quite well," replied Caroline, with that sharp, flashing glance which was only common to her and the brother we spoke of. "I thought you had forgotten him."

"Oh! no, I never forget my friends."

"You change them sometimes, Robert."

"They change, not I!" was my answer.

"May I ask, Robert, how long you have been Richard's friend?" said Caroline.

"It is nearly a year ago since we met in Naples."

"So long as that," she murmured; "that was before"—her face shadowing—"our loss?"

"Yes. I was with him when the summons to return arrived."

"I was not aware of that. You were with him *then*?" she asked, anxiously.

"He was at my hotel when the sad news reached him."

"Did he give way much?"

"He was agitated, but I scarcely saw him a moment; he left for England that day."

"And you have met again, and are the most intimate of friends?"

"Yes; who could help being the friend of one so good-hearted and clever—one so full of life and high spirits, who looks on the bright side of everything and never despairs? I have lost all my old fits of gloom in his society."

"Dear Dick," said Constance; "he is everybody's favorite; I don't believe he ever had an enemy."

"Nevertheless, he has too many false friends, Constance," said Caroline.

"But Dick is not one to be easily led away, Carry."

"No, *he* is not," said Caroline, with a slight emphasis on the pronoun; "for he has seen a great deal of the world—the dark as well as the bright side. It is well he is so good-hearted," she added; "for were Richard selfish, vain, unprincipled—as some men are—his friends would need a warning."

"Bad men betray themselves, sister," said Constance.

"Not always," was the reply; "seldom till it is too late for the victim to escape from their snare. What a victim now," with a curious smile, "would cousin Robert make!"

"Am I so easily deceived then?" I asked.

"You are easily flattered, Robert, very impulsive, apt to obey your own will without much reflection as to future consequences, inclined to form new friends, and," she added, after a slight pause, "to forget the old ones."

"A fine portrait, Caroline," I answered, "but drawn too hastily. You have forgotten something."

"What is that?"

"That it is the portrait of a boy of nineteen—of what has been! Between nineteen and twenty-one, there has been opportunity for change."

"Perhaps so—perhaps so," she said, absently; "so you are of age, Robert?"

"Next month."

"Do you intend to follow any profession?"

"I think not."

"You are very young to give up struggling for life's prizes."

"I have no need to struggle for them—why should I exert myself unnecessarily?"

"Work is a very good thing, even for a gentleman," said Caroline, quietly; "you will find many an evil thought and unjust resolve melt away, when there is something in the distance worth striving for."

"I believe my cousin Richard is not striving for—"

"I am speaking of you, not Richard," she interrupted, with no little sharpness.

"I am flattered by your interest."

Caroline colored, and for a moment seemed disposed to leave me and rejoin her mother.

"I am schooling you too harshly, perhaps," she said, after a pause; "addressing in too personal a manner a relation who has only one month more of boyhood to waste. You must pardon me, Robert, but I was thinking of one who would have urged you more earnestly had she lived."

"You mean—"

"Your mother."

"What made you think of her, Miss Woodleigh?" I asked.

"She has been in my thoughts a great deal lately," replied Caroline.

"I do not understand."

"Caroline nursed your poor mother in her last illness," explained Constance.

"Were you at my mother's side when—when she died, Caroline?"

"Yes," she answered sadly.

"All this seems very strange to me."

"The time of affliction tests real friendship," said Caroline; "and in our trouble your mother was very kind to us. Although years had passed since our meeting, although coldness or indifference had arisen, she forgot all that and came to soothe us in our grief, and soften the bitterness of our loss. She was a true Christian lady."

My lip quivered, but I did not answer.

"When a few more weeks stretched her on a bed of sickness, it was my duty to watch her in return—to comfort her in her distress, to reconcile her to parting from the world without a word, a look from you."

"And was she reconciled?" I asked.

"She died happy—full of hope in her son's future!"

"In my future!" I cried; "oh, don't tell me any more, Caroline—for every word's a stab!"

I seized her hand and pressed it for a moment in my own.

"God bless you for past kindness, Caroline," I said; "you must have thought me an

ungrateful fellow not to thank you. It was not ingratitude, but ignorance."

"Has not your step-father mentioned my name to you, Robert?"

"I have studiously shunned a painful narrative," I replied. "I could not hear from him a word concerning it. Some day in the future, when I can listen better, will you tell me all?"

"Yes, if you wish it," she answered, "*if* we should meet again."

"Do our paths lie so wide asunder then?"

"You do not seek to find us out.—Other friends and pursuits have altered you."

Constance had dropped a few paces back with her younger sister, and I could say with a flushed cheek:—

"Is it wise of me to come again to Grove House?"

"Doubtless you have forgotten the past and its follies," she replied; "you are a man of the world now!"

"And romance is not the main commodity in which the world deals, is it, Caroline?" said I.

"No, or the world would get on badly, I fear. Some early day then, Robert, you will come and see Upton?"

"Leaving my boyish follies behind?" I added, with a laugh.

"Ah! yes, or you had better stop away for ever!"

Richard and his mother had reached the end of the avenue, and were waiting for us to join them. Aunt Woodleigh and her son were talking earnestly as we advanced, and I heard her say in a low voice:—

"Certainly I shall be glad to see him. I was always glad to see him, Richard. When shall I ask him?"

"Now," muttered Richard Woodleigh.

When we were standing in a little group together, Aunt Woodleigh gave me an invitation to Grove House that evening, 'Mr. Heberdeen and his sister had promised to look in; Upton would be home early, and she hoped no previous engagement would prevent me.'

As I bowed an acceptance to Aunt Woodleigh's invitation, Caroline looked thoughtfully

at cousin Dick. She was evidently puzzled with her brother's desire to see me at Grove House, was vexed that no sufficient reason for his anxiety suggested itself. Did she mistrust him then?—was there a reason, or had there ever been a reason for suspecting him who had been cut off with two hundred a-year? Was there something in the background concerning him known to Caroline—perhaps to Caroline alone—which rendered her distrustful of her brother's motives, and made many words that fell from her lips that day sound like faint echoes of Mr. Bowden's warning? There was a certain distance between the two eldest of the family, I saw that when they parted; when the cold bow was exchanged, and the frown deepened on Dick Woodleigh's handsome face as he turned hastily—almost angrily—away.

When Richard and I were proceeding home together, he said suddenly:—

"So Caroline has persuaded you to join them at Paddington again?"

"Yes."

"What does *she* wish it for?" he muttered;

"what object can she have in seeing the old lover of her sister—him she deluded and kept such sharp watch over—back again?"

"She trusts in me not to bring my boyish follies to Grove House once more; better to stop away for ever than do that, she says."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"Ah! there is something more than that in the background," observed Dick, savagely; "Caroline is a wily maiden, who is never without a scheme in her head to advance her own interest and importance."

"You misjudge her, Dick."

"You do not know her," he answered; "you have not seen her grow up cunning and deceitful from her cradle, as I have. She is my sister; but I warn you of her."

"Why, Richard, this is some hallucination."

"You are my friend, and I must put you on your guard," said Dick; "for you will find her try to set you against me! You will hear remarks that only suggest doubt, but which you cannot keep from rankling in

your mind; you will discover her curious about me and yourself, about our pursuits and pleasures, anxious to know everybody's business—a true woman!"

"Dick, Dick, remember she is your sister!"

"I do remember it," replied he; "God knows it is painful for me to tear aside the veil which hides the evil in her nature; I do it for your own sake, and you must not blame your friend."

"I think you are mistaken."

"Still doubtful of my word," said Dick; "well, then, I will tell you all!"

He was deeply affected, or he was a clever actor. His chest heaved, his eyes swam in tears, and his voice was thick and broken. Even his hand shook nervously as it rested for an instant on my arm.

"I can rely on you to keep this secret, Robert."

"Is it necessary that I should hear it?"

"For your better knowledge of human nature—for the sake of justifying the language I have used—it is."

"Proceed then. I will not abuse your confidence."

"Robert," said he, speaking at first with difficulty, and striving to subdue his emotion, "Caroline Woodleigh is a worldly woman, selfish, designing, fond of money. When she was young, she was like no other child; she did not care for play with her younger brothers and sisters, she sat aloof by her father's side, and feigned to study him. It was the beginning of a deep game, and she played well; she wound herself like a serpent round that father's heart, and the result was what she had striven for all her life—an influence over him which lasted till his death. That influence," he said, between his set teeth, "was exerted against me. She showed in glaring colors all my faults, follies, and extravagance; she heightened them in every way; she gleaned from various sources a hundred lying stories which had been circulated against me in London and at Oxford, and did all this so artfully, so purely out of regard for my welfare, and with such a loving sister's face turned to me all the while! How

did it end? God be my witness, if she did not, on my father's dying bed, take advantage of his weakness to induce him to alter his will and leave me but two hundred a-year out of his large fortune."

"Can it be possible?"

"I stand a proof of the possibility of the thing," he answered, with a bitter laugh; "my hopes in life blighted by a crafty woman! And yet I still call her sister, touch her hand in friendship, for the sake of my poor mother."

The impression left on me by this narrative did not appear to please Dick Woodleigh, for he could not refrain from a hasty expression of his disappointment.

"Don't you believe me now?" he cried, vehemently—"have I not sworn it solemnly?"

"There must be some great mistake, Richard," I said; "you have been deceived by a false friend, or there is something more behind the curtain than will ever come to light."

"What do you mean?" asked Richard Woodleigh, with a slight start.

"That there is a reason for all this, unexplained by your sister, your father, or yourself. Have you spoken with Caroline since my uncle's death?"

Cousin Dick gave another start—more evident the second time—before he answered moodily:—

"I have heard her version of the story, and even her's betrays no great discrepancy. She owns to *advising* him on his death-bed, and has the coolness to assure me that my father acted for the best. But let it rest—it is a strange tale, and you are the only one to whom I have related a word of it. Better to have kept it back from you than to have been told it was a fiction!"

"I did not tell you so, Richard," I said; "if I have even implied so, I must ask your pardon. You are still suffering from the bitterness of your disappointment, and can but fancy enemies have been at work behind your back. Your wrongs I believe in, but I think you are mistaken in the author of them, or in the reasons which brought those wrongs upon you."

"Shall I tell you something more in proof of Caroline's duplicity?" said he, frowning; "*that* is all I want to prove to you."

"Well."

"Did she speak of Mr. Bowden to-day?"

"She spoke of my mother—of tending her in her last illness."

"She is not backward in parading her own virtues," said Dick; "and she knew well enough what would make an impression upon Robert Woodleigh."

"Why should she seek to impress me, Richard?"

"That puzzles me," he answered; "but we shall find out in time."

"And this further proof of her duplicity?"

"Is this.—For another reason, not quite so deeply hidden, she has turned your step-father against me — a man whom I have seen but once in my life. Do you see the design woven in the dark mind there?"

I thought of Mr. Bowden's indignation at discovering a friend of mine in Richard Woodleigh,

of his warning, his mention of the sacred promise he had made a *few months* since to some one whose name did not transpire — it was all strange and perplexing, and there seemed no clue to the mystery. And yet was I possessed of so little penetration as to have been deceived in Caroline Woodleigh all my life?

Cousin Dick, watching every sign upon my troubled face, said:—

"Ah! it is a hard thing to believe, but it is a stern fact, and apparent as noon-day. There is a certain amount of evil in every family, and one unlucky member comes in sometimes for more than a fair share. Perhaps he or she cannot help it—it may be destiny."

"Are you a fatalist, Dick?"

"I fancy, now and then," said he gloomily, "that there is a Fate for each of us, a certain Fate, not to be altered by any action of our own, or changed by any prayers, efforts at repentance, anything! Yet, no matter the Fate, it is as well to beware."

"Even of Caroline Woodleigh?" I asked jestingly.

"Ay, even of her," said he, grinding his

white teeth together; "she is the woman in the old play, who—

'Would have made a most rare Jesuit,
She can prevaricate on anything!'"

CHAPTER IV.

A GAME AT CHESS.

It was striking six when we were before Grove House, and under the familiar portico beneath which I had indulged so many vain and foolish thoughts.

Thoughts which were gone now, I fancied; gone, never to come back. The hour was past, the time had glided by, and I could return heart-whole to the side of my cousin, and gaze calmly at her who had been, once upon a time, the heroine of my own love-story!

My aunt and cousins were at tea in the drawing-room, and a hasty glance round

sufficed to show me that young Heberdeen and his sister had not yet arrived.

"Dear me," said my aunt, nearly dropping her cup into her lap at the announcement of our names; "I had no idea you meant to call so early, Richard—I thought you mentioned eight o'clock."

"Six o'clock, mother," replied Dick; "we dined early in order to arrive in time for tea at Grove House. Well, Upton, how are you?"

Upton had already risen from the arm-chair —the old arm-chair of his father, that he had taken as his right, and which had become his favorite seat—and crossed the room towards us.

"Pretty well, I thank you, Dick," answered his younger brother, and then turning to me, —"so the runaway returns again. I am very glad to see you, Robert."

'If Upton Woodleigh be a hypocrite,' I thought, as I received the hearty pressure of his hand, 'he is one of the finest specimens I have ever met with in my life!' But looking into his face, so frank and open — so manly and so full of thought, too—I

could not credit it was the face of a false friend, despite the many hints of his treachery which cousin Dick had suggested.—And yet, in the days gone by, when he stood between me and Constance, when his study seemed to be to keep me from her—the days when I followed the shadows and cried like a child because they eluded my grasp! I turned from him hastily—yes, he had deceived me!

"Really these are the old times again," remarked my aunt, when cousin Dick and I were seated at the tea-table; "there is only Johnny to come back from boarding-school and make the family party complete—quite com—"

She stopped. There was a portrait on the wall which spoke of the great gap in the home circle, not of its completeness. Aunt Woodleigh was silent for a long time afterwards.

Oh! the portraits on the wall, what pride they rebuke in us, what lessons they teach, what memories they conjure up!

Though the confessions with which Dick Woodleigh had favored me had rendered me more observant that evening, I could not

detect in his brother Upton any of that hypocrisy of which he had complained. Upton was evidently glad to see his brother, who was in the best of spirits and very unlike the gloomy being who had told me his extraordinary story in Kensington Gardens. Dick was the life of that little family party, he had so many anecdotes to tell, and so many witty observations to make—certainly his sorrows were not weighing him down.

"Not much difference in Dick, is there, Robert?" asked Upton, after we had sat together some time and talked of the past office days; "nothing seems to depress him."

"He has not the cares of business on his mind," said I.

"Better if he had, perhaps," replied Upton; "you know my ideas of business; a first-rate thing for the constitution, the mind, and the morals. Dick should have taken to railway work and contracts early in life."

"It is not too late to make him *junior* partner."

Upton's countenance changed.

"It is out of my power, Robert."

"Indeed," said I, with a laugh; "what spell renders Upton Woodleigh powerless?"

"A potent one," replied Upton, rather taken aback by my laugh; "I thought you were aware of it, being Dick's most intimate friend."

"No."

"Has not Dick mentioned anything concerning family matters to you?" he asked in a lower tone.

"He has spoken of my uncle's will."

"It is that will which hinders me from offering Dick a share in the business," said Upton; "my father's heart was in his work, and he appears to have mistrusted Dick's power or inclination to assist in it—Dick, too, who was always so clever!"

"And always his favorite son."

"Yes," remarked Upton, thoughtfully; "so we fancied, at least. Still, I think there was a difference between him and Dick that was never quite explained, and there is always something to widen the breach when absence

and ill-will keep the best friends apart. I have not been able to solve the mystery of Dick's legacy, for my father never opened his lips to me on the subject. At times I am wicked enough to fancy that my father was the dupe of some designing enemy of Dick's —and yet he was too shrewd to be easily imposed on.".

A designing enemy! Was Upton about to confirm his brother's words? Almost unconsciously, I looked towards Caroline, sitting, book in hand, half hidden by the window curtains. At one glance of the calm face, all my suspicion recoiled, darted away from its object as flame flashes back from the diamond.

"How is your step-father?" asked Upton, anxious to change the subject.

"Very well, I believe."

"How lonely he must be, despite his great popularity," said Upton; "for what is the good of being a famous or a lucky man, if we have no loved one beside us to share in our triumphs?"

"Not much good, I fear; still, Mr. Bowden

is not quite desolate now his daughter has returned to—"

"Daughter!" cried Upton, "you don't mean that Miss Bowden has come back?"

"Miss Bowden has been some months at her father's house, I believe."

Upton jumped from his seat with all his father's excitability, paced the room once or twice, to the surprise of his sisters and dismay of his mother, stopped at last, and said:—

"Miss Bowden is found!—why didn't some one tell me before? Why am I always the last," he asked, angrily, "to be told anything?"

But Upton's communication was received with equal astonishment by my cousins, and Aunt Woodleigh had to lie back in her chair and take refuge in smelling-salts. The only one apparently unconcerned by the revelation was the handsome man opposite, with the dark eyes, who took up the book which Caroline had laid aside, and commenced reading diligently from the middle of the story.

"Shall we go to-morrow and see her, Carry?" said Constance, eagerly.

"It is scarcely our duty to seek Miss Bowden out, after the studied silence which it has pleased her to adopt," answered Caroline, gravely; "Miss Bowden has her pride, we have ours. If she will not condescend to explain the reasons for her departure from our house, that abrupt, and to us, contemptuous withdrawal, must still remain an insult."

"Miss Bowden would not insult any one intentionally," said Mary, with some spirit; "you judge her too severely, Carry."

"I think with Caroline," remarked Upton, with a serious expression of countenance, "that her motives for leaving us require an explanation, and that we have a right to demand one. I'll go myself to-morrow, that is," he added, turning very red, as several pairs of wondering eyes were fixed in his direction—"if nobody else will go, of course."

"Perhaps I'll go myself," said Aunt Woodleigh; "I am sure Miss Bowden would have no objection to make me her confidant."

"*I* have an objection, mamma," said Caro-

line; "and knowing how every incident out of the common way excites you, I must interdict the interview."

"Very well, my dear," said Aunt Woodleigh, giving way at once; "you know what is best for me. Perhaps it would disturb me a little!"

"And we cannot afford to have our mother disturbed for all the clever governesses in the world," said Caroline, laying her hand with a daughter's fondness on her mother's—"better to live beneath a hundred misconceptions than to let the removal of them rob you of your strength."

"My dear, thoughtful Carry," replied the mother, "I think you would keep everything from me for fear of disturbing me—good news and bad news."

"Bad news I should never tell you, mother."

She looked for a moment at her brother, but he had become absorbed in the book, and was turning page after page in an eager manner.

"Are we to give up Miss Bowden, then,"

said Constance, "before the mystery is cleared? That is not just, Carry. I am sure the reasons which induced Miss Bowden to leave us were urgent; for, with all her eccentricities, she was attached to the family."

"Well, then, you and I will call on Miss Bowden," said Caroline, laughing; "the vote is carried, and I stand in the minority."

"That is well settled, Carry," said Upton; "but you must mind how you go to work."

"Go to work, Upton?" repeated Caroline.

"Why, she is of rather a hasty disposition, and if you don't humor her a little to begin with, you'll—what are you laughing at?"

"An odd thought of mine," replied his eldest sister.

"It's not etiquette of a first-class description to indulge in *odd* thoughts when an individual is giving valuable advice," said Upton, very red again; "but as you know Miss Bowden better than I do, we'll stop the discussion. Come, Dick, put that book down and amuse the company, will you?"

Dick laid the book on the table, and sat for a moment staring at it.

"That is a queer book," he said at last; "whose is it?"

"Mine," said Caroline.

"I mean, who wrote it—an old author or a new one?"

"A new one, I believe," replied his sister; "there is no name on the title-page."

Dick took up the book once more, turned to the title-page, replaced it on the table, stared at it again.

"What work is it, Richard?" I asked; "is it a novel?"

"It will pass for one," he replied; "*is* one, I suppose."

"Come, Dick, you are a judge of books," said Upton; "a regular star in the dark in the way of criticism—what do you think of it? The girls are in raptures, but girls' opinions on the 'last new novel' don't go for much in the literary world."

"They help to sell the book though," added Constance.

"I have not read much of the work," observed Dick Woodleigh.

"More than those critics who have praised

or condemned it, I'll lay a wager," said Upton.

"I don't admire the title, the subject, or the style," was Dick's opinion at last; "it's a book that will never sell. It's too satirical."

"That is the third edition," said Caroline, quietly.

"Ah! the publishers have printed a new title-page," said Dick, affecting a yawn; "a book of that stamp would never fairly go down the throat of the public, even in these novel-reading times. What a title—'BEHIND THE MASK!' The authoress—for it's a woman by the spite in it—had some object of envy or malice in her mind when she drew the villain of the story, and has laid the colors on black enough. One cannot be always 'behind the mask.'"

"The mask drops in the last chapter," remarked Caroline.

"Ah! I have not read that," replied Dick, "and I never shall. How late Heberdeen is!"

"And Miss Heberdeen too," said Upton, with a sly look in his brother's direction. "Come,

Caroline, how are we to celebrate the return of our prodigal cousin? He's sitting here as dull as an owl for want of amusement. Mother, will the piano disturb you?"

"Not in the least, my dear," answered my obliging aunt.

"Then one of you girls will perhaps favor us with a ballad?" suggested Upton.

Constance Woodleigh was the first to run her white fingers over the keys of the piano, and it was her sweet clear voice that a few moments afterwards was ringing in the chamber, vibrating through my heart. It was an old Scotch ballad that in the days of my dreaming I had heard her sing—perhaps had loved her more for singing it—and it conjured up a thousand memories. I remembered the last time that ballad was sung, nearly three years ago, in the summer time, when I had built anew my castle in the air and peopled it with phantoms. They did not all wear black dresses then!

I was thinking of that past, and turning the leaves of the music book for Constance, as I had turned them with a heart full of love

three years ago, when Mr. Heberdeen and his sister were announced.

"Finish the ballad, Constance," said Dick, "and pay your respects to your friends afterwards. We cannot let the ladies off with half a song, can we, Heberdeen?"

"That would be marring the harmony of the evening," replied Heberdeen, in rather a deep voice. Mr. Heberdeen stood near the door, waiting patiently for the conclusion of the ballad, his black eyes taking in the graceful figure of his betrothed at the piano, and surveying steadily the cousin Robert who was so courteous and attentive. When the ballad was finished, Mr. Heberdeen and sister were received with all due honor, and the blushing Constance rose to greet her lover.

There was the slightest shade of discontent on the brow of Edmund Heberdeen, Esq., despite the smile and the "Well, Constance," which accompanied the pressure of her hand, and there was a deeper shading over the eyes, and not the least smile in the world on his face, as we shook hands together fishily.

"Hope you are quite well, Mr. Heberdeen?"

"Thank you," replied that gentleman, without affording me the requisite information.

I met with a warmer reception from his sister. She was glad to see me, had questions to ask concerning the health of Mr. Markingham, and a few remarks to make upon the inexhaustible weather. The first shock of the great loss was over, but the traces were still visible on the pale but beautiful face of her who had suffered.

Dick Woodleigh was soon devoting himself to Miss Heberdeen, and apparently paying little attention to the rest of his mother's guests. The charm of his manner exerted its influence over Miss Heberdeen, and that sad expression of features, which had almost become habitual with her, was replaced by the smiling looks befitting life in its spring.

I had plenty of leisure for observation that evening, sitting between Upton and his mother, and not deeply interested in their conversation; there were two figures in the recess of the window bending over a chess-board, who formed the principal subject of attraction,

and my eyes would wander in their direction, and my thoughts stray thitherward also.

'What a lucky fellow to have gained the love of my sunny-faced cousin,' I thought. 'I wonder whether he be deserving of her, after all!' He was a good-looking man, but where lay the charm that had stolen her heart in the early days of her maidenhood? Was I so greatly his inferior—I who had been first in the lists!—that my boy-passion could not touch her heart?—and yet his had the power to rouse into existence all the warm feelings attendant on the first love of woman.

Was cousin Dick right—had Upton and Caroline at one time been fearful of Constance's firmness, awake to the danger of my silent, earnest attention winning its way to her heart, and had they, in their natural anxiety, stood between me and her, and separated us for ever? Ay, for ever, was it not, for the proud rival was at her side, and she was happy in his smiles!

Had I not forgotten her, then—had time and travel only lessened the passion of youth, not extinguished it, and was I, in the face of

despair, to entertain all my past follies? "No, no," was my inward exclamation, "I will not nurse that thought till it again grows the giant which no reason can quell. I have seen the world since my disappointment, and I was only a boy when I set my heart on my cousin. Let me not act worse than a boy now manhood has come, and the prize which I sought has been gained by another!"

The game at chess was ended, and there was some laughing between the lovers at the result.

"You lost that game in a very clumsy manner, Edmund," I heard Constance say, "and indeed I have my suspicions that you allowed me to win it."

"Chess-players never lose a game if they can help it," replied Heberdeen, evasively.

"What! is that game finished already?" asked Dick, suddenly becoming alive to passing events.

"Yes," answered Heberdeen; "your sister is the victor."

"Ah! she improves rapidly in the Royal Game," remarked Richard Woodleigh;

"Robert," turning to me, "you are a chess-player—why don't you enter the lists against the lady with the laurels?"

"Mr. Heberdeen has a right to claim his revenge," I replied, feeling myself blush in an unaccountable manner.

"Oh! Ned is tired of chess—I can see that by his formidable yawning. Constance, why don't you challenge this Philidor of a cousin of ours?"

"Is Robert so clever a chess-player?"

"So Mr. Markingham tells me."

"Mr. Markingham must entertain no very mean opinion of his own abilities, then," was my answer; "for he gives me the odds of a knight."

Constance Woodleigh evinced some little embarrassment, and I saw one or two shy inquiring glances directed to her late adversary, who was looking steadily in the contrary direction. My aunt Woodleigh made matters worse too by saying:—

"She was sure Constance and I would make a capital match," an observation at which Dick laughed heartily, and said:—

"At chess, mother, of course!" which second remark caused the black eyebrows of Edmund Heberdeen to lower a little more as he rose from his seat and looked towards me.

"Now, Mr. Woodleigh, your cousin is anxiously waiting for you," he said with no small acerbity.

I saw Constance's cheeks flush as she bent over the board, and the little hand shake as it arranged the pieces on their respective squares, and I thought Mr. Heberdeen might be a very honorable and gentlemanly man, and yet be, notwithstanding, a jealous, ill-tempered fellow. Perhaps it was natural enough that he should object to my taking his place and playing chess with a lady to whom I had once professed an attachment — was he aware of that fact?—but it was not very complimentary to scowl at me in a bravo-like fashion and look as if he could eat me. My own temper —not a remarkably docile one, as the reader is aware—was disturbed by his dark looks, and I who, for his sake, had not been anxious to monopolize the attention of his betrothed, now resolved to play chess with cousin Con-

stance just as long as she or time would permit me.

It was a tedious game, despite my cousin's efforts to make short work of it, and sacrifice queen, rooks, knights, everything on the board, in fact, in the most reckless and inconsiderate manner. I was not disposed to win the game at once and let her hasten to the side of that lover who had treated me with more of his old hauteur than had been exhibited since the pic-nic in Richmond Park. I was a long while considering my moves, slow and cautious in manœuvring my men, oblivious to the startling fact of my adversary's queen attempting suicide every half-dozen moves, and regardless of the eligible opportunities of checkmate which were kindly and profusely offered me.

Heberdeen talked to my aunt and cousins in an easy manner, laughed—rather loudly, perhaps—at Upton's little efforts at pleasantry, and kept glancing at me and Constance out of the corners of his eyes. If he saw anything of our game from his post of observation, he must have thought Mr. Markingham's opinion of my chess skill exceedingly over-rated, for

there was a rook of Constance's *en prise*, and about four distinct methods of mating, all of which I overlooked in my extreme anxiety to take care of my pawns.

Considering Heberdeen's dignified airs, and the pleasure it was to have my pretty cousin so near me, it was certainly creditable on my part to put a sudden end to the game for the sake of sparing the feelings of my rival and Constance. I don't know that I was thanked for it—lovers are such ungrateful beings—but I had, at least, the satisfaction of thinking a good action was its own reward, when I was sitting once more by the side of aunt Woodleigh and listening to a long-winded story about her liver-complaint.

The rest of the evening was not a pleasant one to me, did not even pass over placidly with Constance and her lover. Whilst my aunt prosed over her ailments, and I said 'yes,' 'no,' or 'indeed,' as the case might require it, I was aware of a few signs of discontent at no great distance. Heberdeen was grave and taciturn, and all Constance's smiles did not tend much to soften him.

The stately fit lasted the whole of the evening, and he took his bad tempers with him from the drawing-room into the hall.

Heberdeen, his sister, Dick Woodleigh, and I were in the hall, bidding good night to Upton, when a rough bundle of something heaped on the great mat before the door stirred, rose, shook itself, assumed the shape of a wiry terrier, looked at me and growled.

Upton laughed.

"He remembers you, Robert."

"I hope not," I answered, "or I shall be ashamed to look him in the face."

"Down, sir!" cried Heberdeen, sharply.

The dog crouched at the feet of his master, and Heberdeen stooped over him and patted his rough coat.

"He's an old servant, faithful to the last," he muttered.

"Do you think he remembers my cousin here, Mr. Heberdeen?" asked Upton.

"Possibly," was the response; "for, like his master, he does not easily forget his friends or—his enemies!"

CHAPTER V.

OF AGE.

After my game at chess with Constance Woodleigh, my visits to Grove House, Paddington, were not few and far between. Cousin Dick, overflowing with filial affection, was anxious to see his mother three or four times a-week, and I, who accompanied him as a matter of course, had never a reason to complain of my reception. Forming one of the home circle again, and seeing my cousins so constantly, was to produce one effect for which Richard Woodleigh had not bargained, —namely, to renew my affection for every member of the family. There was no mis-

trusting Upton or his sister Caroline for any lengthy period; the frankness of their natures set aside all doubts. Caroline was a prudent girl, but she was not a designing one; a thoughtful sister, an affectionate daughter, a careful housekeeper, there was something every day that brought her virtues to the light. The only thing to perplex me was the difference between her and her brother Richard, and that did not lessen with the lapse of time. Had I not listened to Dick's confession in Kensington Gardens, it is probable that the coldness existing between the elder children of the Woodleighs would have passed unnoticed, it was so little evident to my cousins, so well disguised before the nervous mother. They joined in conversation together, ostensibly they were the best of friends, and there was no sign upon the surface of what was working in their hearts. My confidence in Dick Woodleigh was not shaken as my esteem for Caroline increased; I could no more believe my new friend had spoken falsely, than that Caroline had helped to rob him of his birthright, and I became

convinced that a calm, deliberate explanation between them would set at rest all mistakes for ever. 'If I can be the means of bringing about that reconciliation,' I thought, 'my visits to Grove House will not have been made in vain.' It may well be supposed that those visits were not regarded with a complaisant eye by Edmund Heberdeen, although it was not often we met together at Grove House, Richard Woodleigh being partial to morning or afternoon calls, when Heberdeen was at work over his office-books. Still we crossed each other's path occasionally, and each meeting was characterized by a greater degree of stiffness and reserve. And yet, for his sake, believing my cause was hopeless, I let no sign of the old folly betray me to Constance Woodleigh—was even uncertain if that folly belonged to the present. And yet, when deceived by my equanimity, and believing that no false hopes could be raised in my breast, she became the cousin again, kind, unaffected, and sisterly, what a power there was in her smiles to melt the frost at my heart! After our first meeting at Grove House,

Edmund Heberdeen exhibited no signs of his jealousy to Constance; his pride helped to keep all unamiable feelings in the background, albeit they smouldered, took fresh fuel, smouldered again, and needed but a little out of the common way to burst into a blaze. His contumelious bearing tempted me once or twice to retaliate, and pay more attention to Constance Woodleigh than was absolutely necessary; but I found it was one thing to give pain in the heat of temper, and another, to wound the feelings in a cold-blooded manner. I could see at a glance that Constance Woodleigh was as much his hope as she had ever been mine; that his passion was earnest and deep, and showed itself in every word and look, and I had not sufficient evil in my nature to make that love his torment. For what he suffered then he had but himself to blame—I did not seek to shut the light from his path; he made all dark by his own jealous nature.

Well, jealousy is a human weakness, and I don't set myself up as a reformer of it, or point to Edmund Heberdeen as a striking

example. He who loves deeply is a selfish and inconsistent mortal, who will take alarm at one look of the stranger, and see love and murder under the most innocent glances. That is a very pure, holy love, indeed, that has not a few black attendants in the shape of suspicion, jealousy, &c., in its train—a love that belongs to something brighter and better than this world. There may be some happy couples whose course of love running smooth has borne them straight to the altar, but the Black Pages were behind them, notwithstanding; they were watching every look, waiting for the one mistaken act, thoughtless word, to tumble one over the other into sight and play old Harry with the feelings!

Dick Woodleigh steered his way cleverly between Heberdeen and myself; he did not lose our friendship, although he made each of us doubtful whom he really preferred. He feigned a liking to Heberdeen in my presence, and yet let me understand that that young gentleman was not exactly the fellow after his own heart that I was; talked of his merits, yet condemned his

pride; spoke of his virtues and vanities in one breath, said he was all that was clever and industrious, "but he was not," looking at me, "quite the man to make his dear sister Constance a good husband!"

I have already remarked that Caroline Woodleigh was a prudent girl; about the end of October, she gave me an instance of her carefulness. We were standing at the window of the drawing-room, looking into the garden, where Aunt Woodleigh, escorted by Richard and Constance, was taking her customary walk.

"Do you know, Robert, I have been studying you intently for the last few weeks," she said, with a smile.

"I hope the result has been satisfactory."

"Yes."

"May I ask the nature of your studies, Caroline?"

"Candidly, I have been watching for a sign of your old love to Constance, having been doubtful if visits to Grove House were good for you," she replied. "I told your mother it would be a dangerous experiment."

"Ah! was it her wish that I should come here and renew the past intimacy?"

"It was."

"For what reason, Caroline?"

"Perhaps she had confidence in our power to make you happy here; hoped at some future time you might prefer your aunt and cousins to your own way in a world of temptation. I told her there was temptation here, and you might become a prey to it—how glad I am to find I was mistaken!"

"Love does not live without hope, Caroline."

"Yes, it does," she answered quickly. "There are some to whom hope never comes, and yet they love on, watch, pray for the loved one. There are some—but I have a distaste for anything sentimental, now my own days of sentiment and romance are at end. Your love died when there was an end to the hopes that had fostered it, Robert, but then it was the love of a boy!"

"So everybody tells me," I said; "but I was a strange boy, who thought deeply, too. May I ask what plan of action you would

have adopted, had I shown signs that mine was an incurable passion."

"Treated you as the physicians treat the incurable in general," said Caroline, with a merry laugh.

"Given me notice to quit Grove House for ever, I suppose?"

"Something to that effect; but now the danger is over, you are cousin Robert, again. I shall still keep a watch, though."

"Thank you."

"Watch you for many reasons; see that Richard—who is of a restless nature—does not wean you from Paddington and take you into the world again."

'You will hear remarks that only suggest doubt, but which you cannot keep from rankling in your mind;'—memorable words of Richard Woodleigh, which rose before me and startled me.

"Why should Richard seek to wean me from that place where, like a true son and brother, he finds his greatest pleasure."

"Does he tell you that his greatest pleasure is in home?"

"Do not his constant visits prove my assertion?" said I; "surely, Caroline, you have no mistrust of your brother."

"Do you think I have?" she asked, with a heightened color.

"That would not be sisterly."

"No," she answered; "and yet how many things happen in this world to set brothers and sisters apart. What a world of passion and plotting does a large family embrace in itself."

"Not a family united like the Woodleighs."

"Perhaps not," said she; "have you seen Miss Bowden lately?"

"I have only seen her once since my return to England," I replied, surprised at the abrupt manner in which the subject was changed.

"Constance and I saw her a few days ago —she is greatly changed."

"For better or worse?"

"For better, certainly. She says she is very happy with her father, and he, I believe, is content. There is a gentleness in her

manner which is new, too—yes, there is a great improvement in Miss Bowden."

"And her reasons for leaving Grove House —may I ask them?"

"I do not know them," answered Caroline; "Miss Bowden exhibited all her old firmness when that subject was alluded to. 'It is past, Miss Woodleigh,' was her answer; 'spare me the pain of an allusion to that day. I did not leave without a struggle, or without sufficient cause—let that be my answer now—it will remain the same for ever.'"

"You cannot guess the motive, Caroline?"

"Without a proof, it is not just to form suspicion," answered my cousin; "I have had my doubts, but I have shut my ears against them. It is enough to have evil forced upon me, without seeking for it in the darkness."

"Evil!" I repeated; "surely you do not think Miss Bowden—"

"Hush!" she interrupted; "I do not attribute evil motives to Miss Bowden. More, I believe Miss Bowden acted for the best in her own judgment—acted in an eccentric manner,

certainly, prompted by a nature not the most matter-of-fact in the world—but how we have been rambling in our talk this morning!—let us join them in the garden."

The following day, Caroline Woodleigh was taken ill. It was no light illness, for it kept her to her bed and deprived her of all strength. I have heard that men who work hard in the world, and daily overtax their powers, will give way as suddenly, and become very children in their weakness, and I thought that the illness of my cousin Caroline was a malady akin to theirs.

For had she not overtaxed her strength for many months before and after her father's death, that strength of the mind which needs rest from its labor, and gives way beneath too heavy a burden? She was the one watcher of home, taking the place of her weak mother —she had care to struggle against, she had much on her mind. I knew, in due time, what cares, secrets, and doubts had tortured her daily, despite her invariable self-possession, and I did not wonder then that her powers had failed her when the hour most needed them.

What a blank it was in the house when she was lying ill upstairs—how everybody missed her! Quiet, and perhaps a little methodical, her presence had not been greatly felt, but the void that was left in her absence struck home to them all. Aunt Woodleigh was lost without her eldest daughter; she sat bewildered in her chair all day, and stared vacantly round her. Her children were loving, attentive, and anxious to supply every little want, but they did not *forestall* her in her wishes, did not seem to guess when she wanted them by her side, or when she wished to be left alone to think. She was more nervous, irritable, and hard to please than ever.

Caroline was not a delicate girl, had had hardly a day's illness in her life, and the very singularity of her disease disturbed each member of the family. Upton came home from business cross and out of spirits, Constance had the cares of the household on her mind, and was distracted with keys and housekeeper's accounts, and Mary looked almost as helpless as her mother. Add to this their natural anxiety

for their sister, and Grove House might be considered in confusion.

Richard Woodleigh and I called as regularly as ever. Richard was very anxious to know every day how Caroline was—almost as anxious as myself. That was a peculiar restless feeling of mine, that craving for news concerning Caroline—it was almost unaccountable. I thought it strange that I should miss her so much, be dull in Grove House, even with Constance Woodleigh there, feel so light of heart when the doctor told us she was better, so gloomy and misanthropical when the news came that she was worse. Was it to be accounted for by the knowledge that she had been my mother's confidante, had been a daughter to that mother in the last days of her life?

Richard Woodleigh did his best to make up for Caroline's absence by an earnest attention to his sisters, by an attention still more earnest and affectionate to his mother; to put forth all the charm of his manner and the powers of his mind, to shew what a dear, amiable fellow he was. If his aim were to

secure their confidence, he completely succeeded; he was the eldest son, and in Caroline's absence his advice was of value.

It was not till the middle of November that Caroline Woodleigh ventured downstairs for the first time. She came into the room leaning on the arm of Constance, and walked feebly towards a chair that had been placed for her by the fireside. I hastened to congratulate her on her recovery, but she said, smiling faintly :—

"Not too quick, Robert; I am a long way from convalescence yet."

"But so much better, my dear," added her mother.

"It is a great step towards recovery to get back to the old room, is it not?" said Caroline.

"Yes, and the room looks the brighter, cousin," I answered.

"I am selfish enough to hope everybody has missed me," she said; and then, looking at her brother, added, "well, Richard, have you no congratulations to offer me?"

"I am very glad to see you downstairs

again, Caroline," answered her brother, thus appealed to.

"Thank you. To-day is the fifteenth of November, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what to-morrow is, Robert?" turning to me.

"My birthday—did *you* know that?"

"I have been thinking of it upstairs," she answered,—"wondering if I should be well enough to wish you in person many happy returns of the day. You will be of age to-morrow."

"Yes," I said; "and my good friend, Mr. Markingham, intended to celebrate that event by a little fête at May Fair. We must postpone it till you are well enough to join us, Caroline."

"That may be a long time hence."

"I hope not."

"I hope not, too," she said; "for I shall be glad to be at my post again, taking care of mamma, and relieving Constance from the responsibilities of office."

"If Richard had not been so kind," said her

mother, "I am sure I don't know what I should have done without you. He has been here almost every day with Robert. Are you cold, dear?"

"No, not very," replied Caroline, with a slight shiver; "I think the change has affected me a little—the room is very large. Go on, mamma, you were speaking of Richard?"

"He has been very kind, I was saying, my dear," continued the mother, "in fact, has been so attentive to me that, if it had not been for Constance, I don't know how poor Robert would have been amused at times."

"There, there," said Richard, "Caroline don't want to be wearied with your song in *my* praise, mother; she is fatigued with the journey downstairs, and requires a little rest."

"Yes—a little rest," repeated Caroline, closing her eyes; "Richard is right. Let me keep quiet a few minutes; I want to think."

"Think, Carry!" cried Constance, "don't you know the doctor said that thinking too much had made you ill?"

"It is a hard task to sit still and keep all thought away."

"Then think of something pleasant—of the party that Robert is to give when you are well again, dear."

"That is a more pleasant thought for Constance Woodleigh," answered her sister; "her heart is light and full of hope."

"And what should make my sister Carry's heavy?" asked Constance, tenderly.

"Ah! what, indeed?" was the reply; "perhaps my heart will be lighter when my old strength comes back."

"That will soon be, now," cried Constance; "I am sure of that."

"And then for the grand ball at May Fair," said Dick; "which one of you will open with young one-and-twenty here? Who is it to be? Caroline, Constance, or Mary?"

"Not Caroline," said the invalid, smiling; "she must sit still, and not lose her strength all at once."

"Constance, then," said Dick, "of course it must be Constance. Make her promise at once, Robert."

"I don't mind promising that," said Constance, laughing, "if it will afford my cousin any pleasure."

"The greatest pleasure," I replied.

"What will Mr. Heberdeen say?" said Caroline.

Constance blushed, but replied with a bright smile:—

"Mr. Heberdeen's permission is not required; if it were, he would readily grant it, I am sure."

Caroline looked so steadily at the fire that Constance said:—

"There is a thinking fit coming on, Carry, and we must not allow it."

"I have not been used to company lately," answered Caroline; "you must leave me to myself, dear—my head aches!"

The next day, at the request of Aunt Woodleigh, my one-and-twentieth birthday was quietly celebrated at Grove House. Mr. Markingham was invited, and, after some reluctance, made his first appearance at Paddington, and Mr. Heberdeen and his sister came rather late in the evening.

Caroline Woodleigh did not venture into the midst of us that Thursday; her illness was too recent for the excitement of even a small

party like our own, but I went upstairs during the evening to receive her congratulations. She was sitting in a daintily furnished room, which looked upon the garden, reading the novel that had been the subject of remark one night before her illness.

"Welcome to my study, Robert," she said, laying the book down; "I am sorry Doctor Martin interdicts me venturing amongst you; —he cautions me against excitement. I may read, you see."

"Has that book still its attractions?" I asked.

"Sometimes," she answered; "have you read it?"

"No."

"Will you read it and give me your opinion?"

"I am no judge of books, I fear."

"Perhaps you will take it home with you, to oblige me," she said; "there is some strange writing in it which strikes home—I shall be curious to know if it have the same effect on you. Call it my birthday present."

I thought of the birthday present I had

offered to Constance Woodleigh years ago, and reddened.

"I have to wish you many happy returns of the day, Robert," said Caroline; "to wish your progress from so important a starting point may be all that you desire. Still—"

"Why do you pause, cousin?"

"Wishes are empty compliments," she said, without replying to my question; "what resolutions have you formed?"

"Resolutions?"

"Should we leave youth behind and begin manhood without some settled purpose? You will not waste half your life in idleness?"

"What am I to do?"

"I would do something, were I in your place. I would not be wholly indebted to the stranger for my rise in life."

"I have given up thinking about that," I said, in a slightly peevish tone; "I made my choice years ago, and I cannot turn back now."

"You can go forward!"

"I am not ambitious."

"Are you content, cousin?"

"No," I said, after some hesitation—"not content, perhaps—who is?"

"Then you have formed no resolutions?"

"No," I replied; "I feel waiting for something that will give a turn to my life, and start me afresh, and until that time comes, I must proceed in my old way."

"Well, well, I am not strong enough to reason with you," said Caroline; "you must be a strange young man to be contented with so purposeless a life, you who are not naturally idle."

"I fear I am."

"No; but bad habits have grown with you," she said, "and you will soon lose the power to shake them off. Bad habits and false friends, what wrong they may do you! —your mother feared them both."

"Poor mother!"

"I told her there was a noble nature which would assert itself some day, and in that belief she left the world in peace!"

I did not answer, and she continued, earnestly:—

"You must not let that word, that promise

be broken, Robert, or be ruled by other minds instead of thinking for yourself. You have your work to do in the world,—do not neglect the future, as you have idled away the past! At one-and-twenty, a man, looking back, should proudly say, "That task have I done," and, looking forward, should ask, "What work shall I do?"

I felt the reproof conveyed in her words, and still was silent. There was no reply to make; I was an idler in the ranks of life, and men with more energy of will were marching past me daily, earning name, and fame, and riches.

Yet, name I cared not for, fame I was indifferent to, riches I had. I should not be alone in the world, there would be thousands to keep me company, Dick Woodleigh amongst the rest, and perhaps the best policy was to enjoy the present, and take no thought for the morrow!

'Bad habits and false friends'—'must not be ruled by other minds,'—was she thinking of her brother Richard, and making good his warning?

I thought so as I went downstairs, and yet, might not the warning be necessary in that mysterious future of which I took no heed?

That thought did not leave me when I was in the drawing-room again, and my friends and relations were around me—when Constance was congratulating me, and Richard Woodleigh, his handsome face all smiles, was wishing me prosperity — when Aunt Woodleigh was talking of my merits to Edmund Heberdeen, whom she had button-holed for the evening, and who was listening with a sickly smile—when Upton was shaking me by the hand, and the hand of the friend, philosopher, and patron was resting on my shoulder!

I thought of my warning; if I could have thought of the hour not far distant, and been warned of *that* too by some gentle voice, what sorrow I might have saved my friends, and from what treachery myself!

The evening passed over quietly; there was no sign of the beginning of the end in the far distance, although silently over the wine, in the pauses of the song, in the echo of the voice that wished me health, wealth, and long-life, the web was slowly being spun!

END OF BOOK THE SEVENTH.

BOOK VIII.

"Shall I hopeless then pursue
A fair shadow that still flies me?
Shall I still adore and woo
A proud heart that does despise me?"

SHERBURNE.

"My hostesse asked me how I liked this tale? I said it was long enough and good enough to passe time that might be worser spent."

"*Robin Goodfellow, his mad Prankes and Merry Jests.*"

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF TOWN.

"ROBERT, old fellow," exclaimed Richard Woodleigh, bursting unceremoniously into my dressing-room, a week after I had attained my years of discretion, "it's no good going to Grove House this evening—they're off."

"Off!—where?"

"To Brighton. They started by the afternoon train, and have taken Miss Heberdeen with them. Caroline was progressing so slowly at Paddington, that Dr. Martin would not hear of her remaining in town, and so ordered her at once to the Sussex coast. Upton brought me the news as he was going

to business—have you received a letter from him?"

"No."

"He said he had written to inform you of the fact, and to ask if you felt inclined to go to Brighton with him on Saturday week."

"With pleasure," I answered.

"Why should we leave it till Saturday week, Robert?" said Richard Woodleigh; "we, who have no business on our hands, no rascally contracts to disturb our minds and make us old before our time. Brighton is the very place for us; all the life which keeps London from stagnating has gone to that fashionable watering-place — shall we follow it?"

I hesitated.

"Perhaps they will not thank us for our company, Dick."

"Those *I* care for will be glad to see me," said Richard Woodleigh; "and I am sure my amiable cousin will be as welcome as spring-flowers, or money at quarter-day. Upton is not at Brighton, Heberdeen cannot join them yet awhile, and I hate to see ladies of my

acquaintance strolling unprotected about the streets. So we'll go down and take care of them."

He had hardly ended his assertion when the servant brought in Upton's letter.

"Read what he says," said Dick, "or as you are so busy with that neck-tie, I'll read it for you. Shall I?"

"If you please."

Richard Woodleigh opened the letter and read aloud the contents, which were similar in purport to the news I had already received. He read it, however, in so absent a manner, and with so hoarse a voice, that I left off the arrangement of my tie and stared at him.

"Is there anything else?"

"Nothing," answered Dick; "what else should there be?—read for yourself."

He tossed the letter towards me, and, after a cursory glance, I said:—

"I was afraid there was some bad news which you wished to keep from me."

"Whatever put that in your head, Robert?"

"Fancy, I suppose. Upton writes a queer hand, does he not?"

"I wonder I managed to read such an epistle at all," said Dick; "it's as ugly as an Egyptian scroll, and twice as illegible. He writes worse than ever, and it is my belief he is always in such a hurry that he writes two letters at once—this is the left-handed one."

I laughed as Dick Woodleigh took up the letter again and flapped it carelessly in his hand.

"Well, you will not leave me to go down alone, Robert?"

"Not if you are determined to start at once," was my reply.

"I am surprised that Upton did not wish us to join the ladies immediately, and keep them from becoming low-spirited. I wonder if Heberdeen asked Upton to write this letter to you—or dictated it!"

"Heberdeen dictate my cousin's letters to me, Richard?" said I; "nonsense!"

"Oh! not such such nonsense, Robert, but a piece of prudence, warrantable in a lover who fears losing his mistress."

"He don't fear that, Richard."

My companion laughed and said:—

"I know better."

"Then he is undeserving of Constance Woodleigh," said I, warmly.

"Heberdeen is a man who would be jealous without the shadow of a cause, I am afraid."

"Heberdeen has certainly no cause to be jealous," I said; "I gave up the chase three years ago. I had my answer then from her own lips."

"With Caroline by!"

"How did you know that?"

"No matter. I have heard the story," replied Richard; "and as I have told you before, Caroline 'is a most rare Jesuit.'"

"I don't believe it, Dick."

"You need not," said Richard, his eyebrows lowering; "it matters not to me if you consider her an angel. You had your answer, were easily satisfied, and went your way. Still, you have returned to her side again, she has grown strange in her manner to Heberdeen, they quarrel sometimes, you flirt with her, he

is more proud, she is more distant; there is a line between them which will widen to a gulf."

"I hope not."

"Ah! because the boy's fancy has died out, and you are blind to the beauty that dazzled your youth. Had your heart really been touched, you would have said to me, 'Dick Woodleigh, you are my friend and *her* brother; is there hope for me now?'"

"Had I asked that question?" said I, eagerly.

"I should have answered, 'watch for yourself, and draw your conclusions.' When two lovers quarrel about you, and the lady takes your part, and says you are all that is honorable and good, it looks suspicious—that is all!"

"When did Constance take my part?"

"The day you came of age, Heberdeen and she quarrelled. He objected to Constance offering you such warm congratulations, and made some sweeping remarks which roused the blood of the Woodleighs."

"I am sorry I was the cause of words

between them—very sorry. It shall not occur again."

"So Heberdeen says."

"What!"

"No matter, he is my friend too, and I cannot betray his confidence, though I may pity his folly—I have done. Come to Brighton, and please me, or stay at home and acquiesce in Ned Heberdeen's commands—I will not press you further."

"I'll go to Brighton."

"When? Saturday week?"

"To-night, if it will suit your arrangements."

"To-night is the very time—you can answer Upton's letter when you are in Brighton, and surprise him. If Heberdeen has had a hand in this little note, how he will swear at the result!"

We went to the drawing-room to apprise Mr. Markingham of our intentions, and found that gentleman reading by the fire and smoking a gold-mounted meerschaum which had never formed part of his Barker Street property.

"Brighton!" remarked Mr. Markingham, closing his book; "you have soon come to a determination, Robert."

"Why, as Richard starts to-night by the express-train, sir, I thought I would accompany him."

"Well, there is nothing to detain you here," said Markingham, quietly; "and you will find Brighton gayer than May Fair."

"We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Sussex, Mr. Markingham," said Dick; "the distance is not great."

"Nor the inducement small," added Mr. Markingham; "I'll consider it."

After a pause, he said:—

"Robert, I have just finished your book—will you take it? It may amuse you on your journey."

"What book is it, sir?"

"'Behind the Mask,'" said Mr. Markingham; "the work of some one who has seen life, and suffered in its progress. A hard, bitter volume, the dark colors laid on too lavishly, the light ones with too faint a hand. Have *you* read it, Mr. Woodleigh?"

"No, sir," answered Dick.

"It is worth perusal."

Mr. Markingham's criticism reminding me of Caroline's interest in the novel, I took the book with me to Brighton, even began the perusal of it in the railway-carriage—much to Dick's annoyance, who desired a little discourse on money matters before we reached our journey's end. That discourse was destined to be postponed till the following morning, for the book had been opened, and I was under its spell. It was a book that startled me in the first chapter, for the hero was not a faultless being, as heroes are in novels, but an irritable, discontented ne'er-do-weel, like myself. The evident aim of the book was to demonstrate the sin of discontent, the evils to which it gives rise, and the power it has to make the heart a wilderness. Every page was a reproof to me, and I, who would not have listened to fifty words of objurgation from a friend or step-father, read on with interest. A few brief lines here and there appealed so forcibly to me, laid bare with the touch of genius so much that I had felt

and thought, that I could scarcely believe a stranger's hand had penned them.

"Was Caroline Woodleigh the author?" I thought; "or Mr. Markingham?" They had been anxious I should read the book, were both deep thinkers, knew me well, and had rightly studied my character. Still pondering over the book, and wondering if chance or design, real life or imagination, had produced a character akin to mine, when the train reached the Brighton terminus, and woke me up from reverie.

"Come, Robert, shut up that infernal book —pitch it out of the window. How you can be interested in such nonsense, I cannot conceive!"

"And why you persist in condemning it without a fair reading, Richard, is equally a mystery."

"I have read enough to judge," said Dick, curtly, as we left the carriage and mixed with the busy crowd of travellers, and those to whom the travellers were dear. One of the latter, a lady of slight figure, dressed in mourning, who had been waiting the train's

arrival, passed us, and looked first into the carriage we had quitted, and then, anxiously, into the next compartment.

"Wait one moment," said Woodleigh, as the lady flitted from carriage to carriage of the train, turning occasionally to observe the stream of people flowing by her.

"Miss Bowden, as I live!" was my exclamation of surprise.

"Yes, Miss Bowden. Now, Robert, for once in my life I am going to ask a favor."

It was not for once in his life, but the remark, being a hurried one, was not sufficiently considered.

"What is it?"

"That you will proceed straight to our hotel and wait my coming there. I may be five minutes, perhaps ten—not longer."

"But—"

"But it is necessary, or I would not entreat you," urged Dick; "I have not seen Miss Bowden since she left my mother's house, and it is important I should speak with her."

"Very well," said I—"which hotel is it to be?"

Richard gave me the necessary information, and then left me to pursue my way alone. It was not for long, however, for I had scarcely set foot in the street when a hand glided on my arm, and an agitated voice said:—

"Don't stop, Robert Woodleigh, to ask questions; take the first turning to the right, and walk faster—I shall soon recover myself, I have been running!"

Miss Bowden—for she it was—walked hurriedly by my side, breathing with difficulty. When we were in the street to which she had directed me, she looked round and said, with a deep sigh of relief:—

"He has missed me."

"Do you mean Richard Woodleigh, Miss Bowden?"

"Yes," she replied; "I saw you both together at the station, where I was waiting for my father. I saw him leave you, and I guessed his object and eluded him. If he follow, I rely on your protection."

"Surely Miss Bowden does not fear any incivility from my friend?"

"Ah! he is your friend now," she said,

coldly — "he is all that is well-bred and clever, is he not?"

"I have no fault to find with him."

"What does he want in Brighton?" she asked, peremptorily; "does he follow me here, or know me so little, even *now*," stamping her foot passionately on the pavement, "as to think I will put up with it. I have borne much for his sake and my own; have kept my peace and let others be deluded, but he must not rely too much upon my woman's pride—tell him so!"

I promised the faithful delivery of her message.

"No, no," she corrected hastily; "tell him nothing. I beg you will not inform him of this meeting."

"It shall be a secret, if you desire it, Miss Bowden."

"Thank you," she answered more gently; "and now, what brings him here?"

I told her of the illness of Caroline and the reasons for our visit to Brighton.

She walked thoughtfully by my side for several moments, and then said:—

"Is Miss Heberdeen in Brighton?"

"Yes," I replied; "she accompanied my aunt and cousins this morning."

"Then she is still engaged to Mr. Richard Woodleigh?"

As I again replied in the affirmative, I felt the hand upon my arm tremble very much.

"Am I acting for the best?" she muttered. "God knows—I don't!"

She withdrew her hand from my arm.

"I must leave you here."

"But you will be alone?"

"I am near home," she replied; "still I thank you for your solicitude. Do you intend to stay long in Brighton?"

"A few weeks."

"We may meet again then. My father will join me to-morrow, and when I have him for a protector I shall not be so nervous."

"How times have altered, Miss Bowden!"

"You mean how I have altered," she said; "well, it is true enough. I never thought to be at *his* side again, but when I heard that he was

alone in the world, my hard heart softened. I am happy with him Mr. Woodleigh."

"How glad I am to hear it!"

"I have not shown many symptoms of happiness this evening," she said; "but then I have been disturbed by the past rising before me when I least expected it—the guilty, foolish past! Good night."

Before I could respond to her abrupt adieu, she was hastening away, and feeling that any attempt to conduct her safely to her home would not be favorably received, I turned my steps in the direction of the hotel in the King's Road, where I found Richard Woodleigh awaiting my arrival.

"Why, where the devil have you been?" he asked savagely, as I entered.

"I must have lost my way, I think," I replied; "have you been waiting long?"

"Half an hour."

"Well, and how is Miss Bowden?" I asked, anxious to forestall any questions that might be put to me.

"I haven't seen her," he answered; "she vanished like a ghost. Hanged if I don't

think she crossed the line and risked getting smashed!"

"Was there anything to fear, then?"

"No," said Dick Woodleigh, biting his lips; "who said there was? I — but I'm tired and out of temper — you must excuse me, Robert; I shall go straight to my room."

Dick Woodleigh suited the action to the word, and, after ten minutes' brown study, I drew my chair to the table and opened the book which had not quitted my hand since my departure from London.

I was soon absorbed in its contents again— there was fresh subject for surprise as the story went on, for there was a second character that reminded me forcibly of the gentleman who had recently bidden me good night. But he was the villain of the story, and that could not be Dick Woodleigh! Yet there were, at times, his very words and turns of speech expressed on the page before me, and once it seemed so like Dick Woodleigh's style of reasoning that I put the volume down and went off into a brown study again.

I finished the book that night; I was glad

to have done with it. It left an unpleasant impression upon me, which it took days to shake off. It made me almost distrustful of my best friend, Dick Woodleigh, of whom I had been so often warned, and to whom I had lately given all my affection and—lent all my money!

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

The week which followed my arrival in Brighton was a week of trial and temptation.

A week in which the few resolutions I had made—remembering Caroline's exhortation on my birthday—began to melt away, and to be replaced by a visionary's dreams. A week in which there was little to consider or to study, save my cousin Constance. There was no one to warn or watch me; Caroline was not strong enough to leave her room, Upton and Heberdeen were in London, and the rest, not even Constance, had no suspicions of the struggle that was taking place within me.

Was it by accident or design that in our walks Constance Woodleigh was always my companion? that her hand rested on my arm, and there was no one by to hear a word of our conversation?—simple and common-place conversation enough, about Caroline, her mother, or the scenes around us, and yet so dangerous to me! So very dangerous, despite the knowledge that another claimed her, and she was to marry him next year; despite strange moments of indifference in myself—moments which soon died away though,—when all her beauty, smiles, and confidence failed to stir my heart. Yes, she was constantly my companion; in our walks Dick escorted his mother and Miss Heberdeen, and left Constance to my care; when the mother was too weak, or disinclined to leave the house, Dick preferred the company of Mary and Miss Heberdeen to a *tête-à-tête* with the object of his affections, and when we rode out on horseback something always occurred which brought me to Constance Woodleigh's side and kept me there!

And Constance, knowing her own heart, and

having faith in me, never for one instant thought of love reviving in my breast, and treated me with all a sister's confidence. And thus a week went by, temptation growing stronger every day, strange words and hints of Richard Woodleigh keeping her foremost in my thoughts, adding fuel to the fire, fostering wild hopes, and weakening all my moral courage and honorable principle. There was nothing to distract my mind—there were no friends but the Woodleighs to mix with, Miss Bowden had disappeared as mysteriously as she had crossed my path, and Caroline, the only one who might at that time have turned me by a word, was not well enough to take the part of watcher. A watcher came at last, however, suddenly and fiercely in the midst of us. On a Friday—unlucky day for lovers as for travellers!—Edmund Heberdeen made his appearance.

We were strolling on the Chain Pier, Dick with Miss Heberdeen and his sister Mary, and I with Constance Woodleigh, when he marched towards us, looking very erect and dignified.

"What, Ned!" cried Richard, shaking him

heartily by the hand; "this is a pleasant surprise. How are you?"

"Quite well," he said, laconically.

"Have you any news for us, Edmund?" asked Miss Heberdeen nervously, for since her father's death she was easily alarmed.

"Not any, Harriet. I am here two days earlier than I anticipated; is that anything so extraordinary?"

"But your office, Edmund?"

"I can obtain leave of absence and get my 'day-out' like any other servant, Miss Heberdeen," he said, bitterly.

"And very glad we are to see you," said Dick Woodleigh; "there are some more friends of yours behind, but they walk slowly, and we are always losing sight of them—oh! here they are; I did not know they were so near!"

"Neither did Mr. Heberdeen," said Constance, her face radiant with smiles, "for he has not deigned to bestow one glance upon us."

"I was afraid I might disturb you and—" glaring at me with wild beast ferocity, "*your cousin!*"

"Oh! we have not been plotting treason, Edmund," said Constance, with a musical laugh, which was checked suddenly, as not a muscle of his face relaxed; "but how grave you are! Is anything wrong at home?"

"Nothing is wrong *at home*, Miss Woodleigh, or abroad—that is, of any consequence. May I ask how Miss Caroline is?"

"Much better; but—"

"Your brother Upton desired to be affectionately remembered; he will be down by the eight o'clock train to-morrow night."

"Edmund," said Miss Heberdeen, in a tone not intended for my ears, "you have forgotten Mr. Robert Woodleigh, I think."

"Forgotten Mr. Robert Woodleigh!" exclaimed young Heberdeen, unnecessarily loud, "I ask ten thousand pardons of that gentleman for omitting the reverence due to him. I hope I see you well, sir?"

"Quite well, Mr. Heberdeen, thank you."

"The sea air appears to have done you a great deal of good, sir!" continued he. "You were looking pale when I saw you last at Grove House. Over-study, perhaps?"

"No," was my brief response.

My blood was tingling in an unpleasant manner, and my face reddening with the attempt to repress any exhibition of anger before him or my cousins. He saw me flush, and was more ironical in consequence.

"I hope you intend to make a long stay in Brighton, Mr. Woodleigh," said he, "if only for these ladies' sakes. Your time being at your own disposal, gives you the advantage over us poor clerks, sir."

"I shall not hurry back to London, Mr. Heberdeen, and the ladies shall receive every attention."

"I do not doubt it."

"Shall we retrace our steps homeward?" suggested Miss Heberdeen, quickly perceiving the current of ill-feeling beneath our false politeness. "Mrs. Woodleigh and Caroline will think we are neglecting them."

"Pray let us return at once then," said Heberdeen, offering his arm to Mary Woodleigh, who, rather surprised at his attention, blushed as she accepted it. We walked back in pairs towards my aunt's apartments at the

Warwick, the last couple—Constance Woodleigh and her cousin—rather meditative.

I made one or two efforts to sustain the conversation which the arrival of Heberdeen had broken off, but Constance replied in monosyllables, or answered so irrelevantly that it needed little observation to detect the subject was foreign to her thoughts. Richard Woodleigh and I did not dine that day at the Warwick Mansion, but returned to our own hotel, promising to spend the evening with our friends.

"I did not accept their invitation to dine," said Dick, "because you and Heberdeen are not the best of friends, and the less you see of each other the better. What a jealous fellow he is!"

"There was very little to make him jealous this morning, Dick."

"That does not matter much, when he is in one of his extravagant moods," said Richard; "poor Constance! I suppose she'll come in for the largest share of his ill-humor this afternoon. If he ever marry her, he'll worry her into an early grave."

Dinner was concluded, and we were smoking our cigars over our wine, and still talking of Edmund Heberdeen, when that gentleman's card was brought to Dick. There were a few words written in pencil underneath the name, and my cousin read them attentively, biting his lip meanwhile.

"Tell Mr. Heberdeen I will be down directly."

"He will not come up, Robert," said Dick, after the servant had withdrawn, "though he wishes to see me particularly. Will you excuse me for half an hour?"

"Certainly;" I answered; "pray don't mind me."

"But I do mind you," said Dick, with some warmth, "and I have a very strong objection to this kind of behavior," flinging the card into the fire; "it's not treating my friend like a gentleman! We are here in Brighton together, and if he wants to see me, he should not say, '*without your friend*,' and underline it as though it were highly objectionable. Confound and curse his pride—there's no better blood in his veins than in ours!"

"He may have something important to communicate, Richard, and I am not anxious for his society."

"Well, I shall not be long."

Dick Woodleigh departed, and I stayed at home, smoking my cigar and thinking of Ned Heberdeen's faults. I went to sleep over Ned Heberdeen's faults, too, and dreamt that gentleman and I were wrestling at the end of the Pier, and endeavoring to pitch each other into a rough and uncomfortable-looking sea beneath, and I was still engaged in the contest, and had nearly got him head downwards over the side, when Dick's return woke me up in the moment of victory. It was nearly dark, and I must have been asleep two hours.

"How late you are, Dick."

"Yes," replied he; "I have had to listen to no end of raving. Talk about a passion, I never saw a man in a greater rage in my life."

"What has occasioned it?"

"Oh! the old story. He says your attentions are too marked to his betrothed, and that he comes to me, a mutual friend of both, to ask—*demand* I think he said—the reason.

He also expresses a wish for your absence this evening at the Warwick."

"Does he require an answer?"

"Not in person. He declines respectfully, but firmly, an interview with Robert Woodleigh under any pretence."

"Did he send that contemptuous message to me?" I cried.

"I have quoted his words as correctly as my memory will allow," answered Dick; "but you must consider his excitement—he hardly knows what he is doing."

"He knows well enough what will insult me," I said fiercely, "and I will afford him no explanation—tell him he has no right to ask it."

"Why not tell him—"

"Neither is my answer to be dictated by Richard Woodleigh," I shouted, interrupting him. "I have replied to Mr. Heberdeen, and have nothing more to say."

Cousin Dick, unprepared for my resistance to his suggestion, was taken aback by my vehemence. He moved towards the door.

"Well, I will tell him."

"Is he below, then?"

"Yes," said Dick, hesitating.

"Is he afraid to see me?" I cried; "afraid to ask me those insulting questions which he scruples not to send by you?"

I made a rush towards the door, but Dick Woodleigh had closed it and set his back against it.

"Let me pass, Richard," I said; "I will see that man!"

"Just consider for a moment what harm it may do," entreated Dick; "my dear fellow, remember he is a friend of the family!"

"So am I!"

"Yes, yes; but he is in no condition to meet you at present, and your impetuosity will not allay his excitement," said Dick; "as the friend of both, Bob, I cannot let you pass."

"Very well, perhaps high words will do more harm than good," replied I, returning to my seat; "take him his answer. I will not follow you."

I did not follow him, but the departure of Dick Woodleigh was the signal for me to leave

the room, and descend by another staircase into the street. I had no intention of meeting Heberdeen then; I was only anxious to reach the Warwick before him, and take my place, if possible, by the side of his betrothed.

"He express a wish for my absence from the Warwick!" I muttered, as I strode on at a rapid pace; "*demand* a reason for my marked attentions, and decline under any pretence an interview with *me*—I will show him what I care for his wishes and demands!"

All those antipathies that I had had to him in my boyhood, that had grown with me, and but known a diminution with his loss of fortune, were revived again with tenfold force. I could see no virtues in him then; he was all that was proud and vindictive—he was not worthy to be Constance Woodleigh's husband; he would make her life a misery!

When I was ushered into the apartments of the Woodleighs, I found cousin Constance and my aunt the only occupants of the drawing-room. Constance looked up with some surprise as I entered, and my aunt exclaimed:—

"Oh! good gracious, Robert, has Richard met with an accident?"

"Not that I am aware of, aunt," I replied.

"You came in with so grave a face that I was afraid something serious had happened."

"Nothing has happened more serious to your son than a meeting with Mr. Edmund Heberdeen," I said. "How is Caroline this evening?"

"Much better, thank you," replied my aunt; "she talks of turning over a new leaf to-morrow, and going out in search of the sea breeze. Oh, dear! we Woodleighs are a very long time getting over our complaints!"

Whilst my aunt was talking, I kept my eyes on Constance. There were no signs of any recent agitation in her demeanor; she was calm, self-possessed, perhaps a little thoughtful. If there had been a storm, it was one of those storms of Venus which an old poet asserts to be "tempered with rose-water," for, five minutes after my arrival, I heard her singing softly to herself.

"I hope Caroline will not be induced to join us to-night; she came down too soon at

Paddington, and had a relapse in consequence."

"I think I'll go and see where she and the girls are," said she, rising from her chair; "Robert, my dear, will you lend me the assistance of your arm to the door of the next room? Thank you. Don't move, Constance; Robert will be back in a minute, and you had better find something to amuse him till tea is ready. Dear me," she said, peevishly, "I think it is quite time we had tea!"

"Shall I ring, mamma?"

"Certainly not, dear. Mr. Heberdeen and Richard have not returned yet—what a time they are, to be sure!"

I saw aunt Woodleigh to the door of Caroline's boudoir, and then hastened back to the drawing-room. Constance was sitting at the table, listlessly turning over the leaves of an album.

"Well, Constance, in what manner are you going to fulfil your mother's injunctions?"

"To amuse you?" she asked with a smile; "surely you are big enough to amuse yourself. Here are a great many books; here's

the *Illustrated London News* and a chess problem to solve—here's the almanack for the coming year."

"I hate almanacks, and I don't much care about chess problems," was my reply.

"You must make your choice," said Constance, "for I am very busy."

She feigned an intense interest in the album, and I sat biting my nails and regarding her. Was it at Heberdeen's command that she hung aloof from me, or was she fearful of offending her lover?

I took up the *Illustrated News*, sat down at the chess-table and arranged the pieces as in the diagram before me.

Five minutes passed.

I was thinking little of chess strategy, and a great deal of Edmund Heberdeen, whom I had resolved to mortify that night, if possible, when Constance's voice aroused me.

"Have you solved it, Robert?"

"No."

"I must be improving in my chess play, for I mastered it this afternoon, with some assistance from Mr. Heberdeen."

This statement puzzled me.

There had been no quarrel between the lovers, then, or there had been explanations and reconciliation. And yet something *had* happened to disturb Mr. Heberdeen's feelings, or he was an excellent hand at bottling them up before company.

"I must give the problem up. Will you show me the solution, Constance?"

She seemed to hesitate again.

"Are you determined to resign so easily?"

"Yes, it is wasting my time and disturbing my temper."

Constance left her album, and came and stood by the chess-table whilst I re-arranged the pieces in the requisite position.

"I fear I have forgotten the clue to the mystery myself," said Constance, bending over the table, with an expression of doubt on her pretty face; "let me see, I think the pawn moves to the king's fifth."

"Shall I play the black men?"

"Yes."

Constance drew a chair to the chess-table and sat down facing me, one little white hand

hovering over the pieces, the other beating a rather impatient tattoo whilst she waited for my move.

There was evil at my heart, where the revengeful feelings had gathered together, whispering 'If he could come in now, he who despised you, treated you, in his foolish jealousy, as some menial beneath him, sent you his orders by a go-between!'

The door opened, and a voice announced:—

"Mr. Heberdeen!"

I did not look up—after what had passed, it was not my place to acknowledge the presence of him I felt I hated.

It was enough for me to know that he was there, that the frown was deepening and the dark eyes gathering fire. It was a triumph to me!

"What a time you have been away, Edmund."

Edmund walked towards the fire, leaned his elbow on the mantel-piece, rested his head upon his hand, and after staring at the blazing coals some moments, answered absently:—

"Yes—a long time—too long!"

"Mr. Woodleigh has been trying to solve this problem."

"Has he?"

"Yes, but he has been unsuccessful, and requires assistance. Do you remember the second move, Edmund?"

Heberdeen did not deign a reply until the question was repeated, when he gave a quick stamp with his foot and cried "No" in the most decisive manner.

Constance looked towards her lover, but he kept his gaze directed to the fire, and would not meet her glance. Sullen and disdainful, he stood there in his old position—the picture of a jealous swain.

"If Mr. Heberdeen will not condescend to enlighten us," said Constance, with a quivering lip, "we must solve the riddle for ourselves, Robert. I think the knight discovers check."

"Then there is a chance of escape for the king, Constance—*the bird is not yet mated!*"

There was a terrible noise amongst the fire-irons, as if Mr. Heberdeen had leaped over the fender into the midst of them, but I

did not raise my eyes for an instant from the chess-board. It was a strange attempt to solve a mystery of Caissa with thoughts far away from the subject; it was less strange to find, after five moves had been made on each side, that the black king had escaped from the snare, and the white faces were all in confusion.

"I cannot recollect it," said Constance, with a forced laugh; "I think we had better postpone it till to-morrow."

"The morrow never comes, Constance," was my answer.

"My memory is a bad one—I am in no mood for chess—my head aches."

"Well, one more attempt, and I release my fair prisoner," I said; "there," quickly re-arranging the pieces in their former position —"play the white men again, Constance, just to oblige an old obstinate cousin, who don't like to give up anything he has once undertaken."

Mr. Heberdeen abandoned his meditative posture, and came with a savage hop, skip, and jump to the side of Constance.

"I will show Mr. Woodleigh the position, Constance," he said, sternly.

"But—" began Constance, in a hesitative manner, as she rose from her seat.

"I will return you the gentleman in one moment, if you desire it, Miss Woodleigh," he said quickly; "but it is a pity to keep him longer in the dark."

"I am obliged to Mr. Heberdeen for his pity," I answered; "although perhaps a more deserving object of it might have been discovered."

"Will you allow me to enlighten him, Miss Woodleigh, or shall I withdraw until this pleasant game be ended?"

"Why withdraw, sir?" asked Constance, raising her head proudly.

"That old aphorism concerning the disagreeable number three—Miss Woodleigh perhaps remembers it?"

"I remember too much, sir," answered Constance haughtily, as she passed him, "and Mr. Heberdeen will remember this day also."

Heberdeen kept his eyes fixed on the

receding figure of his affianced wife till the door closed and shut it from his sight—then he turned to me.

"Now, sir," he said, in a voice that was very husky, "this problem!"

There was a rapid movement of his hand across the chess-table, and then kings, queens, bishops, and pawns were swept off the board and dashed in one general ruin to the ground.

"A clever move, Mr. Heberdeen," I remarked.

"Not the only clever move that has been made this day, sir," said Heberdeen, his black eyes flashing with the passion which clenched his hands and made his chest heave, "or the only move to be accounted for."

"Accounted for—to whom?"

"To me, sir,—to *me*," cried Heberdeen.

"I sent an answer to you by Mr. Richard Woodleigh; I said then that you had no right to ask an explanation—I repeat it!"

"I had a right then—I have a greater now. The suspicions belong to the past, and the present has confirmed them."

"Then there is nothing to be accounted for!"

"I think there is."

"Not to you," I retorted, "lest you should think I fear your anger, or am moved by your majestic manner. I have *my* pride, Mr. Heberdeen."

"The pride of an upstart who has fattened on my family's ruin," exclaimed Heberdeen; "the pride which humbles itself before riches for the sake of a share in them; the pride that sits idle or works mischief—nothing nobler than that!"

"Mr. Heberdeen did not always think so lightly of riches."

"I have learned my lesson since—yours is to come. My fall was sudden; I may rise again as suddenly. But this is not the point, sir," cried he, "not the scheme which I intend to foil, or lose my faith in woman's truth and purity."

He marched once up and down the room, and then took his stand before me again, not much improved by the perambulation.

"Are you aware, Mr. Woodleigh, that

your cousin Constance is engaged to me?"

"I am."

"Engaged to be my wife in a few months?"

"I have also been informed of that, sir."

"Then, sir, you are a coward! You play a coward's part and stab behind my back, taking advantage of my absence, and caring not for her feelings or my own—I say it shall not be!"

"Why did you not tell me this some hours ago?—*demand* your explanations then?"

A look of surprise mingled with his anger as he answered bitterly:—

"Because you were afraid to hear me."

"The manner of hearing was not certainly convenient."

"No matter the manner, Mr. Woodleigh—time is precious, and I have something further to communicate."

"The briefer, sir, the better."

"I presume it is your intention to follow up the chase, to seek, as the expression runs, to 'cut me out?'"

"I shall not answer those questions."

"You *dare* not own your love for her!"

It was my turn to give way, and, half mad with passion, I raved out:—

"I love her, THERE! I loved her years ago,—before your eyes had seen her, or you had thought of winning a heart too good, too gentle for your comprehension. I will love her to the last!"

Heberdeen had to struggle with his own utterance before he could reply.

"Then Constance Woodleigh must decide between us. The avowal has been wrung from you—the avowal which I wished—and you or I must leave her side for ever. I will not have you near her, eager for her smiles, walking by her side, winning her, in moments of weakness, to make promises to *dance* with you! I will end your love-dream, or my own, at once. I will end it NOW!"

He dashed his hand upon the table from which he had swept the chess-men, and split the veneer in half-a-dozen places; he glared into my face with eyes full of hate and rage.

"She shall tell you to go with her own lips —it is her place, now you have acknowledged your passion."

"She will not confirm your decree of banishment—I am sure of it."

"She must consider my happiness, or she is not worthy to be my wife. A true woman will make any sacrifice."

"If it be asked in a true spirit!"

"I will ask it as my right; it is for her sake as well as mine. She shall tell you to begone—she shall—"

The door opened, and Richard Woodleigh entered.

"Hallo, Bob, you *are* here then? That was an artful trick of yours, to steal a march on me," said he; "why didn't you say you were in a hurry to get to the Warwick? Is anything the matter?" looking hard at me.

"Ask Mr. Heberdeen."

"Yes, Dick, something very serious," said Heberdeen; "I have brought your friend to an explanation at last, and it is as I feared. You could not have come at a more opportune moment, for I have a favor to ask. I wish

you to tell Constance that I am anxious to see her for a few moments *alone*."

"Now, Ned, you are in one of your hot fits—leave it till the morning."

"I will not leave it for one instant," cried Heberdeen.

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then, I must obey you. I suppose," hesitating a moment, "I cannot adjust this difference between you two Hotspurs?"

"Mr. Heberdeen and I are not anxious to shake hands, Richard," I said.

"Will you tell Constance of my request, or will you not?" asked Heberdeen, sharply.

"I'll tell her," said Dick.

"I presume," turning to me, "that I am not compelled to have you for a witness. I said *alone*."

"I will oblige you by withdrawing."

I left the drawing-room, took my hat from the hall, and walked into the King's Road. I had not proceeded far before Richard Woodleigh overtook me.

"This is a queer business, Robert," said he. "Heberdeen's mad humor has lasted longer

than I expected. What does he want to ask Constance?"

I told him.

"He is in too great a passion to explain a thing calmly, and Constance is already offended—there will be a storm at the Warwick."

"It will not last long."

"Long enough for Heberdeen to make a fool of himself, or I'm no judge of human nature. Bob Woodleigh, he's playing your game, but you don't look pleased at it."

"No."

"All may be settled by this time; Heberdeen may have said a word, *will* say a word that will drop the curtain over his happiness and leave the road open for yours. By Jove, it is soon over—here he is!"

Edmund Heberdeen, looking very wild, the frown deeper than ever, the face ghastly in its whiteness, came rapidly towards us.

"Well, Ned, I hope it is all settled amicably."

"It is settled!"

"What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Is it so difficult to understand? This *gentleman*," indicating me with a wave of his hand, "and I have been playing a match, and he has won the game! I congratulate him."

He raised his hat with mock politeness, but I did not imitate his example. There was something so despairing even in his irony, that the sting of it fell harmless.

"Dick, I shall see you at my own house when my sister comes back to London. Good bye."

"Good bye—where are you going?"

"I leave Brighton to-night."

"Nonsense. You have been too hasty—you will forget all this in an hour or two."

"Not in a life-time!"

"Come back with me to Constance, and—"

He broke away from his friend's hand, that had rested for a moment on his arm, crying:—

"Never, Dick! Never again!" and then darted away into the dark night, and left us looking blankly at each other.

"Am I a true prophet, Robert?" said Dick, at last.

"It appears like it."

"It is all for the best; they were not fit for each other, were they?"

"I don't know," I said, peevishly; "I'm sorry I have been the cause of making him or Constance miserable. It was a fool's trick of mine, and can do no one any good."

"That remains to be seen!"

We did not return to the Warwick that evening; we spent the evening at our hotel, drank a great deal of wine, and smoked a large number of cigars. My mind was troubled at first; sorrow and remorse were at my heart, and sat heavy on my conscience. But I drank my wine, and listened to Dick Woodleigh till there was a fire and lightness within me that put to flight all the shadows. Hope sat at my right hand—that hand which got so unsteady after the third bottle!—and the world before me looked, through my bloodshot eyes, quite happy and frolicsome. For Dick talked of Constance, and in that world before me, or in that false flashing meteor which seemed my world that night, she was the brightest vision!

CHAPTER III.

STILL DREAMING.

The following day Caroline Woodleigh kept her promise; she took her place by her mother's side, and, save looking a little wan and feeble, was the same Caroline, gentle, kind, and thoughtful, whom I had ever known.

And where was Constance? Had she given way beneath that blow which had uprooted love and laid her hopes in the dust?

Her cheeks were pale, and her voice at times tremulous, that was all! But they were early days yet, and the memory of a first love—when it is *bonâ fide*—sinks deep in the heart,

and leaves scars thereon which are hard to get rid of. I was at first doubtful whether the particlars of the lovers' quarrel were known to any of the Woodleigh family; all seemed to be moving in the ordinary channel, Aunt Woodleigh was as prosy as ever, Mary as quiet, and Caroline, for all her weakness, not in the slightest degree discomposed. The day did not pass without satisfying my curiosity.

I was sitting in the drawing-room wherein such high words had been interchanged, Aunt Woodleigh and Caroline my companions. Mary and Constance were in their dressing-rooms preparing for a little journey to the railway station, whither I was to accompany them and wait for Upton's arrival, and Miss Heberdeen had already left for London, escorted by that most faithful of swains, Richard Woodleigh.

Aunt Woodleigh had a peculiar facility for falling asleep when the conversation was badly sustained, and that evening, in particular, my aunt's head, after sundry spasmodic dives, rested placidly on her bosom.

I was staring at the fire, as Heberdeen

had stared some twenty-four hours since, when Caroline startled me by touching my hand with hers.

"Robert," she said, in a low voice, "there was a quarrel between you and Mr. Heberdeen last night, I hear."

"Yes."

"Followed by a quarrel between Mr. Heberdeen and Constance; a lover's quarrel, founded on nothing but doubts which were groundless and unjust. You know the termination?"

"The engagement is at an end," I said.

"Yes, so Constance says—so Mr. Heberdeen has said before. Poor Constance, she tries to bear her troubles well; but it is a poor struggle—she is not strong-minded."

"Every day will help to heal the wound, Caroline."

"You don't know her," said Caroline; "more, you don't know any of us Woodleighs. We make up our minds to a purpose, or we set our hearts on an idol, and be it for good or for evil, we remain ever unchangeable."

I thought for how long a time I, a Wood-

leigh too, had set my heart on Constance; for how long a time, amidst hope and despair—the sunshine and the storm—the idol had been reared for my worship!

"Constance is hiding her sorrows from me as well as from mother," said Caroline; "treating them lightly and forcing the smiles to her lips, lest her own agitation should add to my weakness."

"Do you think that?" I asked, moodily.

"I am sure of it. I have not been Constance's friend and counsellor for so many years without reading her face like a story; it is an innocent face, that tells all its secrets! Do you know, Robert," continued Caroline, "she is trying to make me believe that she cares nothing for Heberdeen, and is glad the engagement is ended? As for the reasons that broke off that engagement, they puzzle me, for Constance evades details concerning them. Therefore, being as curious as most of my sex, Robert, I have been deceitful enough to let mamma fall asleep, in order to coax the truth from my cousin. Now, sir, I am all attention!"

"But—"

"But go on, Robert," said Caroline, in a fidgety manner; "Constance will return in five minutes."

"Will it excite you, Caroline?"

"Not in the least."

Briefly as possible, and not without blushing, I began the story of the preceding day, of Heberdeen's arrival at Brighton, his jealousy at finding me with Constance, his following me to the hotel, his contemptuous messages, his final meeting with me. Caroline listened attentively, and when my narrative was concluded, she said:—

"I did not think Edmund Heberdeen was so headstrong and wilful. Perhaps it is as well all is over, and yet they loved each other very dearly, would have made, I think, such a happy couple!"

"I do not think they would. He was too proud and overbearing; he was not fit for her; he—"

Two eyes were regarding me with a very sharp expression, and I felt my color change.

"Finish your sentence, cousin."

"He was not worthy of her!"

"Robert," said Caroline, almost sternly, "had Edmund Heberdeen any cause for jealousy?"

"Very little," I answered; "I have kept nothing back—have told you everything that passed between us."

"It was not sufficient to lead to the result, and I have been deceived in you, or some one has made Heberdeen his dupe. Robert," she said, with a sudden start, "where was Richard yesterday?"

"With me."

"Where was—oh! I am very wicked," sighed she, covering her face for a moment with her thin white hands, "and the evil thoughts will never keep away! I am a suspicious woman, distrustful of one it is my duty to esteem, judging a man's whole life and conduct by one erring action. God forgive me!"

"There! my story has excited you."

"No," she said, looking up; "I am very calm. I am not excited in the least."

At this moment Constance and Mary

appeared, and Mrs. Woodleigh woke up suddenly.

"Take care of my dear children, Robert," said my aunt, when we were ready to depart, "and see after Upton at the crossings; he is always so—oh! dear, I forgot Upton was not a little boy—I'm afraid I have been asleep."

"Just dozing, aunt."

"Ah! just dozing—I should have been asleep in another minute though, if the girls had not come in. How do you feel to-night Caroline?"

"Quite strong again," said Caroline; "you need not be nervous about me any more, mother!"

It was not a very lively walk to the railway station, Constance being dull and taciturn.

I thought of all the encouragement Dick had bestowed upon me last night over the wine, but it did not lighten my spirits much, with the grave face of Constance at my side.

I discoursed on a great variety of subjects, which Mary chiefly responded to, and Constance walked on in a somnambulic manner,

favoring me now and then with a hard monosyllable, which came in more often than otherwise in the wrong place and disturbed my current of ideas.

'Still,' I thought, 'she is not giving way —this is the first day after the loss, and she bears that loss well; there *is* hope for me in the future! Dick is quite right—what a dear fellow he is, to be sure, and what a fine brother-in-law he will make me!'

We found the London train already at the terminus, and the passengers issuing into the street.

"I hope brother Upton has come," said Mary, looking anxiously round her; "for with Dick, Upton, and Mr. Heberdeen away, how dull it will be to-morrow!"

"Very dull," murmured Constance.

But Upton Woodleigh was close upon us, and ere we could realize the impression of the dull Sunday we should spend, he was in the midst of us, kissing his sisters and shaking me by the hand.

"You are a pretty fellow to wait for me till Saturday, Robert!" said he; "how long have you been in Brighton?"

"Nine days."

"You are the most eccentric being under the sun, I believe," said Upton; "first you keep away months, even years, and then"—his eyes twinkling—"there is no getting rid of you! Upon my word, Mary, I think you must have something to do with it."

Mary laughed and shook her head; Constance laughed too, but it was not the merry laugh of the past, and Upton looked at her curiously.

"I have a hundred questions to ask about Carry, and mother, and the rest, as we proceed homewards," said Upton. "Robert, will you see to Mary? Come, Constance,"—offering her his arm—"time is precious, and I want to ask you question No. 1."

Constance glanced timidly at him; the smiles had left his face, and he was looking as grave as in business hours. He had seen Heberdeen, I was sure of it! Had he come as a messenger of peace, bringing good tidings to Constance, or had Heberdeen formally resigned his pretensions to her hand, and broken the spell which had charmed him?

I offered my arm to cousin Mary, thinking seriously of another cousin meanwhile, and we had turned to retrace our steps when a well-known voice, sharp, clear, and ringing, startled me by its propinquity.

"Benedicite! Robert Woodleigh!"

I turned round hastily, and discovered Mr. Markingham and Mr. Bowden by my side; they were arm-in-arm too, and looking quite affectionate and brotherly!

Our party came to a halt again, and I regarded my step-father and my patron with amazement as they shook hands with me and my cousins. Despite the painful reminiscence of our last meeting, Mr. Bowden was not distant in his manner towards me.

"I hope I see you well, Robert," he said, in his gentlest tones.

Upton Woodleigh blushed and stammered a little as he addressed Mr. Bowden and inquired after the health of his daughter.

"She is quite well, Mr. Woodleigh, thank you—may I hope Miss Caroline is better?"

Constance answered in the affirmative.

"I have heard a bad report of her health

lately. I hope you will think," addressing Upton, "it is from no want of interest in her who watched my poor lady in her last illness that I have refrained from visiting you and making my inquiries; think business, trouble, anything kept me away rather than forgetfulness."

"Well, then, nothing can keep you and Miss Bowden away to-morrow," said Upton, eagerly; "we shall all be very glad to—"

"To-morrow is Sunday," said Mr. Bowden, gravely; "I do not make or receive visits on that day, Mr. Woodleigh!"

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I quite forgot that for the moment. You preach here to-morrow, sir?"

"Three times."

"Then on Monday, sir, if you and Miss Bowden be disengaged."

Mr. Bowden shook his head.

"My daughter's time is greatly occupied, and—and—some other day, perhaps, we may be enabled to accept the invitation which you have kindly made us."

Upton did not press him further, and Mr.

Bowden, who had frowned, and turned red, and been altogether embarrassed, was evidently relieved by the cessation of my cousin's importunity. Upton turned to Mr. Markingham, and Mr. Bowden said to me in a lower tone:

"Have you been in Brighton long?"

"Not a fortnight, Mr. Bowden."

"Are you staying with your cousins, Robert?"

"No, sir—I have apartments at an hotel."

"With that man still?" in a whisper—"the man I warned you of?"

"Mr. Richard Woodleigh?—yes."

"Ah!" with a half groan, "you will go your own way, and no power of mine will ever restrain you. Yet I must not neglect my duty to yourself, to your mother, and if I cannot hinder you from evil, I will point it out, at least. The last time we met, I said in anger, 'I have done with you.' Try and forget those hasty words of mine, boy, and come and see me now and then."

"I will come and see you soon, sir."

"It is a promise; Mr. Markingham, will you see that it is kept?"

"I will bring him with me, Mr. Bowden," was the answer.

We went our separate ways that night, and I resigned the society of my cousins for the companionship of Mr. Markingham. Mr. Markingham was in a reflective mood all the way to the hotel, and asked no questions about my cousins or myself till we were seated by the fire. Then he took up the poker, and after hammering at the coals a moment, said :—

"Where is Mr. Richard Woodleigh, Robert?"

"He started for London this morning."

"Alone?"

"No, with Miss Heberdeen."

Mr. Markingham battered at the coals again, and fell into another brown study, from which I aroused him by mentioning the name of Mr. Bowden, and expressing my surprise at finding him his companion.

"We met by accident in the railway-carriage," said he, "and having that carriage to ourselves the whole of the journey, were compelled to take refuge in each other's con-

versation. That conversation was chiefly about you."

"And no one else?" I asked, suspiciously.

"And your sworn brother in arms, Dick Woodleigh."

"What has he said of him?"

"Nothing tangible—nothing to clutch at," said Markingham, angrily; "but there is a something on Mr. Bowden's mind which your friend has put there, and for which he does not thank him. That something is of importance, too, and I must find it out."

"Is it necessary?"

"Woodleigh," said Markingham, "I promised a dying man that I would guard his daughter, and study her happiness in life, and I will keep my word. I never broke it yet."

He let the poker drop with a crash into the fender, and sprang to his feet.

"She shall not marry a man on whom suspicion rests. I am her guardian, and she shall not be sacrificed!"

He sank into his chair again and said:—

"I came to study Richard Woodleigh, and he vanishes away!"

"He will return on Monday."

"But you are left," he said, not heeding my remark; "and by all our friendship, as brothers, as father and son, as what you will, I ask you for your confidence, your old confidence of the past, Woodleigh!"

"I have nothing to conceal from you, Mr. Markingham."

"Then, will you answer one question unreservedly?"

"Yes."

"I ask then for your true opinion of Richard Woodleigh's character."

"I cannot give it you," I replied. "It is a mystery to me."

"Ha! do you distrust him too?"

"No, but I meet with those who do, and I am in the dark as to their reasons. I find Richard Woodleigh a frank, impetuous, careless friend, but one always ready to help or advise me. I am his companion, I see him almost every day, and I witness much to admire and little to distrust. Why should those doubts perplex me which beset you and Mr. Bowden?"

"There is some mystery about him, and where there is a mystery doubts will naturally exist," said Markingham; "he is a designing man, or has designing enemies, and I will discover which."

A few days after that dialogue, when Mr. Markingham was still at Brighton and Richard Woodleigh had returned, when Caroline was rapidly recovering her strength, and Constance was getting pale and weak, when Upton had gone back to London, and I was becoming convinced of the hopeless nature of my passion—that old passion from which there was no escaping—a letter came for Mr. Markingham.

He was sitting at the breakfast-table when the letter was delivered to him, and Richard Woodleigh and I were facing him. He flushed a little at the hand-writing, but that was the only sign of emotion which betrayed itself as he broke the seal and read the letter carefully.

"I hope I stand excused, gentlemen," said he, "for attending to business of a private nature in such goodly company."

"No bad news, I hope, sir?" asked Dick.

"Mr. Markingham considered that question some time before he answered it, stirring at his cup of chocolate meanwhile.

"What would you consider bad news?" he asked at last.

"It does not require a wise man to answer that, Mr. Markingham," replied my cousin; "loss of friends and loss of fortune compose three-fourths of all the bad news in the world."

"Yet both may make us happier."

"How so?"

"We may lose those whose friendship does us harm, and the fortune that slips from our grasp may benefit the more deserving, and make us better men."

"I hope such happy news was not contained in your letter, Mr. Markingham."

"You shall know when I return."

"Are you going out, sir?" I asked.

"To London—at once," said Markingham, rising; "I have a duty to perform, and delay is always dangerous. I shall be back to-morrow."

Half-an-hour hence the London train was rattling on its way, and Mr. Markingham, full of his sense of duty, was borne with it from the Sussex coast. That same day a letter reached Richard Woodleigh, which, after being attentively perused, was tossed contemptuously on the table.

"From Edmund Heberdeen," explained Dick, "who has gone raving mad."

"Are you jesting?"

"Not mad with love, as your romantic thoughts have probably suggested, but with a more dry and unpoetical disease—Law."

"Has he not had enough of law by this time?"

"No," answered Dick; "he writes word that he is anxious to see me—anxious to bother me, he means, with all the dusty details of the confounded estate at Nettleton — that the case is almost clear, that a deed has been discovered, signed by Mr. Markingham's father, which proves he had a perfect right to dispose of his property, and that it was not strictly entailed on your respectable patron. Very true, and perhaps a grand discovery, but what a foolish way to make it public!"

"Has he made it public?"

"Yes, he has thrown himself on the bosom of the lawyers, put his case in their hands, and will lose the rest of his small fortune, and be no nearer his object. Lose his sister's money too—damn it!" exclaimed Dick, turning pale, "I never thought of that!"

"Mr. Markingham's letter must have been a notice of a new action."

"Ah—yes—something or other," said Dick, in an absent manner; "and Markingham will fire up at the attack, and harass the enemy in a thousand different ways; Heberdeen will have to resign his snug Government berth to defend himself, and all will go to rack and ruin in no time. He writes like a fool—like a reckless mad fool, as he is!"

"Shall you return to London at once?"

Dick bit his finger nails and looked at the fire, walked to the window and looked at the sea, dropped into a chair and confined his gaze to one particular spot on the carpet. When I fancied he had forgotten my question, he said:—

"No, let him go his own way. I can only

give him warning to stop, and his pride—curse his pride!—won't let him do that. If he had only gone first to Markingham, he might have sold his chance for a few thousand pounds, which would have done him good and Markingham no harm. Now, he has flung down the gauntlet, let him fight his own battles whilst his money lasts."

"And Miss Heberdeen's."

"No," said Dick, with a stamp of his foot; "not if I have a voice in the matter."

Dick was troubled in his mind all that day and the next. He was anxious for Mr. Markingham's return; anxious too, despite his assertions to the contrary, to get to London. Still he lingered, wrote more than once to Heberdeen, and evinced evident signs of impatience as day after day passed and no Mr. Markingham arrived with news of the law-suit.

That law-suit troubled me too, led me into deep speculation concerning the effect it would have on my fortunes, supposing Heberdeen came off the victor. For the first time too it struck me that my friend Richard was playing

a double game, was waiting to learn Markingham's plans before he decided on his own course of action, and although I scouted the suspicion as a base and unworthy one, it flitted before me in my thoughtful moments, by the side of my friend, even at the Warwick where sat Constance with no jealous lover to guard her!

CHAPTER IV.

AWAKENING.

A WEEK before the Christmas of 1848, when Caroline was well again and Constance was more thoughtful still, Mr. Markingham reappeared at Brighton. He arrived at the hotel about seven in the evening, and his first orders were for his dressing-gown and meerschaum. He was in excellent spirits, quite gay, in fact, for as he filled his gold-mounted pipe he hummed an opera air over it.

Richard Woodleigh and I were his companions by the fireside, were both waiting with some anxiety for those revelations which it might please him to make. I was doubtful

whether he would be particularly communicative before my cousin, and the same thought crossed Dick Woodleigh's mind, though he was wise enough to know that his best policy was silence. Mr. Markingham, however, was full of his subject, and began at once.

"Have you heard from Mr. Heberdeen, Mr. Woodleigh?"

"Not this week, sir."

"Possibly he has informed you of the action he was kind enough to bring against me."

"Yes, and I am very much surprised and grieved."

"Grieved, sir!—why?"

Mr. Markingham took the pipe from his lips, and curled the ends of his long grey moustache. He appeared interested in Dick Woodleigh that night; his whole conversation was addressed to him.

"Grieved to think his stock of common sense was so small," replied Dick; "that his experience of the 'glorious uncertainty of the Law' did not assure him of the chances against him."

"Do you think Brooke was right then when he sang:—

'The Laws they were made for the Little,
The Laws they were made for the Little;
It is not by Right,
But by wrong-doing Might,
That Giants still 'scape a Committal!'"

"Brooke was not far out in his satire," answered Richard Woodleigh.

Mr. Markingham resumed his pipe and was silent several minutes. I could see his grey eyes twinkling through the smoke as they were fixed upon my friend.

"Mr. Heberdeen is a young man of some spirit," continued Mr. Markingham, "and did not study costs, or think much of his time, when he entered the lists against me. He might have acted more gracefully — perhaps more gratefully — but, still, I do not blame a man who fights for a cause he thinks is a just one."

"When he is sure to be ruined in the end, it matters little whether it be a just cause or not," said Dick Woodleigh.

"It matters to the conscience, I think, Mr. Woodleigh."

"Oh! of course, to the conscience — I was not thinking of that."

"No," said Markingham, drily; "you were not! However, I fought once in a good cause and won the battle, and now I must still fight in what to a certain extent is a bad cause, for I attack with my riches the just rights of my opponent. That attack is too strong for young Heberdeen's purse."

"Not a doubt of it," said Woodleigh.

"I have seen him and told him so, but he has become very obstinate and reckless, and will not listen to reason. I told him, also, it would have been kinder to have laid the case before me, and he drew himself up stiffly, and said, 'You gave no warning to my father, Mr. Markingham!'"

"That's Ned Heberdeen all over," muttered Dick.

"I might have bought off the action for six or seven thousand pounds, had he met with me in a friendly spirit."

"The very thing I told Robert!"

"Or have settled four or five hundred a-year on Miss Heberdeen, if that would have been more desirable."

"Did you make that proposition to him, sir?" asked Dick Woodleigh.

"Well, no. He would have looked at it in the light of a bribe for his silence, and seen dishonor in accepting it; he has very rigid notions, has young Heberdeen."

"What does he expect?" said Dick.

"Perhaps he is sanguine of success, and in that belief will spend his last penny, his sister's last penny too, in a cause that is hopeless."

"Hopeless!" repeated Dick, mechanically.

"Ay, in the hands of the pettifoggers he has fallen amongst, — fifth-rate land-sharks, who care nothing for the interests of their client, and everything for themselves. I can afford to return to my sea-side quarters and the pleasures which this gay place invites me to, knowing the weakness of my enemy and the strength of my cause. You look thoughtful, Robert; don't you admire my resolve to fight to the last, knowing the children of my

rival, enemy, and old friend must sink before me?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, it troubled me till I investigated the rights and wrongs of the case, and then I cut the Gordian knot at one blow. It is all settled now."

Dick Woodleigh looked up with eager eyes.

"Settled to the amazement of all the lawyers in Christendom, who never saw a finer case — for themselves! Settled by restoring to the Heberdeens one-half of my fortune; settled with satisfaction to the article we don't altogether study in matters personal, Mr. Woodleigh—the conscience we were speaking of just now."

"Have you—have you given in to their claim?—left it wholly uncontested—lost half your property?" asked Dick Woodleigh.

"More—there are some arrears to the good."

"Mr. Markingham," cried Dick, starting up and shaking him by both hands, the one which had the pipe in it having dropped it rather hastily, "I am amazed at this extraordinary proof of a noble nature—it is grand

and sublime, sir! It is worthy of record in the annals of heroic men. Half your fortune to the Heberdeens—your enemies."

"No, my particular friends," said Markingham, rising and releasing his hand rather hastily; "my very dear and honored friends, sir!"

There was something strange in the reply, something haughty in the way in which it was delivered. Mr. Markingham had laid aside his pipe, and was standing with his dressing-gown wrapped round him. Richard Woodleigh, at some little distance, was lowering from under his bent brows, puzzled at his manner, doubtful of what was coming next, of what the bright light in the keen grey eyes portended.

"My very dear and honored friends," repeated Markingham, "whom their father, with his dying breath, entrusted to my care. They have been my care from that day; I have not neglected them. Standing in the back ground, I have been observant of their danger."

"I was not aware of any danger impending over the Heberdeens," said Dick.

"There are dangers hanging over the best and worst of us," said Markingham, "hanging by a single hair. We tread the allotted path, and walk on darkly, dreamily, ignorant of what is waiting in the distance. You and I, Mr. Woodleigh, may be marching forward, confident in our attractions, our powers to charm and lead astray, and yet the pitfall may be open, waiting!"

Dick Woodleigh regarded the speaker with curiosity, flinched a little, too, beneath the steady light in the eyes of Mr. Markingham. He resumed his seat, however, without making any comment upon Mr. Markingham's last speech, and the gentleman who had delivered it, after appearing for a moment vexed at his own vehemence, hastily left the room.

"Mr. Markingham is excited to-night," said Dick, shrugging his shoulders. "I wonder what he has been driving at? He's a queer fish."

"He's a shrewd man, Dick."

"Ay, and a benevolent being, too," responded Dick. "One of the old school, who don't turn up now-a-days very often. God

bless his grey hairs, he has been the making of me! Where's Bradshaw? There was a copy on the table half-an-hour ago."

He jumped up again and looked for the railway guide, which having obtained, he began to scrutinize with eagerness.

"I must hasten to congratulate Harriet on her good fortune," he said, suddenly closing the book; "must see Heberdeen and his sister early to-morrow."

He walked to the door.

"Are you going out?"

"I shall leave Brighton to-night by the next train," he said coldly, so coldly that I felt my face burn; "you, of course, will remain with Mr. Markingham. We shall meet in London *some day*. Good bye."

He was gone—*gone for ever!*—and I sat surveying the door, which he had left open behind him, with a very stupid expression of countenance. Presently Mr. Markingham returned.

"Has Mr. Woodleigh gone?" he asked, after a sharp glance round the room.

"Yes—to London."

"So, so—to marry Miss Heberdeen at once perhaps—impetuous lover. Now, Robert, try and remember something!"

"Well, sir?"

"Where was Richard Woodleigh when Miss Bowden left Grove House?"

I looked up; that question had given life to fresh doubts.

"At home; he had been home from college one day, I believe."

"And he was engaged to Miss Heberdeen then?"

"Yes."

"Put on your hat and come with me."

I complied with his request, and we were shortly in the lighted streets.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"To Mr. Bowden's apartments—he is still in Brighton."

"Have you his address?"

"Yes. The day I met him in the train he was anxious I should bring you to his house—now I will keep my promise."

As we walked on hurriedly, I could feel Markingham's arm shake within my own.

"I am clinging to a frail hope, perhaps," said Markingham; "building my castle on the sands, and yet believing in its firmness. Yet how that hope has haunted me since that meeting with your step-father—how I trust in it even now! If the hope die out, the castle fall, why, God help Harriet Heberdeen!"

He did not speak again till we were standing in a square before the door of a handsome mansion. There was a gas-lamp over the door, and Markingham referred by its light to a card he held in his hand.

"This is right; in another hour, Robert, we may know the worst or best."

He knocked, and the servant who responded to our summons took up our cards to the popular preacher, who was at home, and who met us, in his eagerness, upon the stairs.

"This is kind of you, Robert," he said, grasping both my hands—"you have not quite forgotten me, then. Ah! Mr. Markingham, I hope I see you well."

He led the way to a room on the first floor, where Miss Bowden was seated, surrounded by books and papers in the most admired confu-

sion. She rose as we entered, shook hands with me, gracefully acknowledged her father's introduction of Mr. Markingham to her, blushed a little at the earnest gaze which that gentleman bestowed upon her.

"You must excuse the evidence of Miss Bowden's studies," said Mr. Bowden, as his daughter hurriedly gathered her papers and books together; "but time to her, as well as me, has been valuable of late. I fear she is studying time too much and her health too little, for the only benefit she derives from the sea-breeze is obtained through these windows. And a sea-breeze in December, when you are sitting still, is too much of a luxury."

"Not for me," said Miss Bowden, smiling.

"Well, you will be the sufferer by it, dear; I am not often exposed to its effects."

"I wish you were—yet no, you are doing good, although your constant travelling keeps me anxious."

This was a strange change—father and daughter in the past so hard and unyielding, and in the present evincing such affection!

Mr. Bowden saw my look of surprise, and said :—

"You can't reconcile the old times with the new, Robert, or believe we have both forgotten and forgiven everything, yet it is true."

"Not that we have forgotten everything, father?" said Miss Bowden, in a low voice ; "thank God, the memory of the past is a beacon to warn us, and a charm to make the present more happy."

"Yes," said he, thoughtfully, "and I think Robert has a right to know the secret which has made us content. Shall I tell him?"

"Better leave it till an opportunity more fitting," murmured Miss Bowden, with a glance towards Mr. Markingham.

"I object to procrastination."

"But—"

"But—"

Father and daughter looked into each other's face, stopped, and laughed.

"You see we are still a little obstinate," said Miss Bowden to me ; "fond of argument and contradiction! Father, will you tell

him? I think it is best, if Mr. Markingham has no objection."

Mr. Markingham bowed courteously, and muttered, "Not the slightest objection," and neither father nor daughter noticed his suppressed agitation, his manifest impatience.

We were sitting round the fire, Miss Bowden by her father's side, when my stepfather began.

"The secret of our present happiness—so far as there can be happiness for me," his face shadowing a moment beneath the consciousness of an irreparable loss, "is this—confidence, implicit confidence in one another; a knowledge of each other's character, its strength and weakness; a love that studies to give way, never to resist! Had we but had faith in the goodness of each other's motives years before, Mely!"

"There is always something to repent of in the past," said Mr. Markingham.

"Yes, sir, and I, though a preacher of the word, have much to look back at and regret. Pride, obstinacy, a violent temper, a—"

"Father, father!"

"It's quite true, my child; I'm not ashamed to own those faults which led to our disunion."

"Both our faults."

"Yes, both. Robert, did your—your—ahem—mother ever tell you the story?"

"No, sir."

"I will tell you now."

"Is it a long one?" began Mr. Markingham, "for I—"

But Mr. Bowden, with his usual impetuosity, had already begun.

"My dear daughter, Robert, you will be surprised to learn, is possessed of a great gift; that gift which makes the poet, the novelist, and the man of letters—Imagination. You will be still more surprised to learn that years ago, before I came to Nettleton, I thought that gift was sent as a curse to us both, or was a design of the Evil One for the destruction of her soul. I strove to crush out, in my narrow-minded bigotry, every spark from the fire of genius which God had lighted in her; I set my ban and interdict upon it. My daughter also was of a fiery,

passionate nature, impatient of control, ambitious of a name, was encouraged too by her poor mother to secretly prosecute her studies, and the result was a coldness and an estrangement which grew stronger every day. At last her mother died, and we, two stubborn natures, were left alone together. We were poor, at that time very poor, and one day when trial and trouble had drawn us closer together for the moment, she told me tremblingly, yet proudly, of a book that she had written and had hopes of selling. I burned the book that night!

Miss Bowden colored at the reminiscence, but her hand stole into her father's and remained there, pledge of forgiveness for an act that was never forgotten!

"Yes, I destroyed the labor of years in my wilful ignorance of what the book contained. I was content to know it was a work of fiction—I had no belief then in the power of fiction to warn, instruct, offer example, teach a moral, and I crushed by my action every hope which she had fostered. What might have followed, God knows, if we had

stayed together, for we loved each other, and love overlooks all faults, but—"

He paused.

"But I left him, in my cruel anger, childless," added Miss Bowden, "stung by a wrong which time might have set right. In my after struggles with the world I brooded on that wrong until to my diseased mind it became an injury not to be atoned for. I—"

"Enough, Mely," said Mr. Bowden, "when you heard by chance that I was in the world alone and a sufferer, you took a daughter's place, and have been a comfort and a blessing to me ever since."

"And you have removed that interdict, opened to me a field for my labor, rendered me as proud and ambitious as ever!"

"Have your literary labors been crowned with success, Miss Bowden?" asked Mr. Markingham.

"A moderate success, sir," was the bashful answer.

"And the name of the first work," I said; "is it 'Behind the Mask?'"

"Is it a fair question to ask a lady who is

behind the mask herself?" replied Miss Bowden.

"This is a time to ask many questions, Miss Bowden," said Mr. Markingham, impatiently; "questions which affect the life-happiness of more than one, and we have come hither hoping you will answer them."

Mr. Bowden and his daughter regarded Mr. Markingham with no small astonishment.

"I break the ice in a rough manner, and I ask your pardon," continued Mr. Markingham, exhibiting an excitement that I had seldom witnessed in him; "but every minute to me is precious, and an hour too late may be the misery of a life. Mr. Bowden, some weeks ago you spoke of a warning given to your step-son."

"A warning that was unheeded," said Mr. Bowden.

"Believing my influence over him was greater than your own, you repeated that warning to me?"

Mr. Bowden nodded.

"We ask you now, sir, for the proof of those suspicions—we ask it as a favor."

Miss Bowden sat silent and motionless by her father's side, her hands locked together rigidly.

"Is not my word sufficient?" answered Mr. Bowden, proudly.

"Not sufficient for the end we have in view," was the reply; "not sufficient to undermine the trust of years."

"We can give no other," said Mr. Bowden; "it is impossible. If Robert will not take my word and cast Richard Woodleigh off, close his ears to his counsel as he would to the hissing of a serpent, I cannot help it. My promise to my daughter, my own pride in that daughter, will not let me speak! But, Robert," he added earnestly, "if that warning has had its effect at last, and led you hither for confirmation of your doubts, this is a happy night for me."

"Miss Bowden," said Markingham, "you must forgive me if I pain you,—I, a stranger; but I ask you, by your woman's heart, by your sympathy with your sex, by your power to save the innocent from evil, to clear away this mystery!"

Miss Bowden set her lips more closely as she answered :—

"No, sir."

"It is not for Robert's sake; it is for the sake of a loving, trusting woman!"

"Is she blind?" was the sharp query.

"Blind to the faults of him she loves—who is not?"

"There will come an awakening, sir," replied Miss Bowden. "Richard Woodleigh, with all his art—his specious show of virtues — his watch over himself; his care to study the weakness of those he seeks to profit by—will betray the blackness of his heart some day. Till that day come," said she, passionately, "let her wait, as *I* waited."

"No, Miss Bowden, she must wait no longer. Richard Woodleigh has deceived her for years, and there is fresh incentive for disguise now her prospects in life are brightening. This time the mask will not drop till the word is spoken that makes her wife and victim!"

"You speak of Miss Heberdeen?" murmured Miss Bowden.

"Yes."

"So long dazzled by the flame, and still fluttering round the fire that may consume her! And yet, may he not love her, sir, in earnest?—she is a beautiful and gentle woman. Robert," turning to me with a startling precipitancy, "was she engaged to him before I left Grove House?"

"Oh, yes—some months."

She drew a long breath, and muttered:—

"The villain to us both! He loves her not; he has never known what a pure passion is!"

"Miss Bowden," said Markingham, rising, "I charge you by your love of justice, by your duty to your neighbour and your God, to thwart the machinations of that man. If you, knowing his unworthiness, can let an innocent girl be sacrificed, there is no woman's nature—woman's feelings in you! Mr. Bowden, I ask you to assist me by your efforts; you are a minister of the Gospel, anxious to save souls, there may be one lost ere the week is ended. I seek no explanation for myself, I can imagine the studied villainy from

which your daughter has escaped; but Miss Heberdeen has a right to hear that story, and no false pride should thwart its revelation."

"You are right, sir," answered Mr. Bowden, "it must be told! Amelia, have I any influence over you?"

"It will not be required, father," said Miss Bowden; "the secret has been kept too long already. If Miss Heberdeen be on the eve of marriage with that man, I will tell her all; tell her of the poor sinful outcast he would have made of me, if God had not helped me in my hour of need. I have been silent as much for the sake of those who loved him and who were kind to me, as for myself, and now, sir, silence would be a deadly sin. Let the idol fall to pieces, it is best for her, poor girl! Mr. Markingham, you may command me."

"Miss Heberdeen is in town—has recently come into the possession of some thirty thousand pounds. Richard Woodleigh, poor in purse, unprincipled and heartless, left in haste for London this evening."

Miss Bowden started to her feet with flash-

ing eyes. There was no longer any hesitation to hold back the story, to put off the hour of her confession—a confession, I felt assured, of a trusting woman's heart, and of her nearness to that brink from which the fall is fatal! Impulsive, eager to begone upon her painful mission, she said:

"Father, you leave to-morrow for London —you have to preach there in the evening— will you go to-night instead, and take me with you?"

"Willingly," said Mr. Bowden, rising.

"You will allow me to accompany you," said Mr. Markingham; "Miss Heberdeen is not strong, and it takes but little to unnerve her. I am an old friend of hers, and would prepare her for the shock."

"Right, sir," said Mr. Bowden, catching the general infection of impatience, "there is nothing to delay you, I hope, Mr. Markingham? Minutes are valuable in a time of danger."

"Nothing, sir," was the answer; "Robert, when will you join us in London?"

"I shall return with my cousins to-morrow, sir."

Half-an-hour afterwards they were on their way to London, following fast upon the track of Richard Woodleigh. Half-an-hour afterwards I was at the hotel again, sitting in the room where the true friend and the false had sat some hours ago. Before the fire, staring at the fitful blaze, fair type of my will and moral strength, that flickered faintly, sprang into light and life, and then died out again—I thought of the dupe that I had been in my conceit and blindness. I saw that my future prospects, my command of money, had drawn,—as it always draws,—the cunning and false around me, and I had taken them to my heart and reverenced them as friends. Future prospects and money at command, what had they done for me but generated idleness, and led me into temptation, extravagance, and folly?—taught me reliance on the stranger, but no trust in myself! Did a voice from a purer world than this—a mother's voice—whisper to my heart that night, wake me from my lethargy, and teach me much that was my duty?—I think so now!

CHAPTER V.

REPARATION.

If Richard Woodleigh had been anxious to see me married to his sister Constance, knowing that his power over me and my money would have been greater than his influence over Edmund Heberdeen, if he had been really the bold and unscrupulous schemer, would he have considered much the means to the end he had in view? Would he not have related to me false stories of Constance's affection for me before her engagement?—have studied the headstrong nature of Heberdeen, and stung his heart with doubts? Would he have scrupled at a thousand lies to advance one step nearer

to his project, or thought for an instant of the happiness of others that might be sacrificed through his dark agency?

And he had told me falsely, had told Heberdeen falsely, filled me with hope and love, and fomented jealousy in the heart of my rival, had passed from one to the other, playing his part carefully, and never overacting it, masking all beneath the name of friend.

I knew it when it was too late; I read it in the face of Constance Woodleigh, in the sorrow disguised by pride, in the effort to be as she had ever been, in Caroline's concern for her, in my own consciousness of the hopeless nature of my dreams.

I gave up the chase again, that weary foolish love-chase, begun so early, ended now for ever, and relinquished silently every chance of winning her. It was no great struggle; I was even surprised at the ease with which I resigned all thoughts of her, and the little pain it caused me in so doing. There were none of the past feelings of despair to unnerve me, or that sense of being cut adrift from a

great purpose and launched on a sea of uncertainty.

There was left me a duty to perform, and I did not shrink from it. I had been the means of parting Heberdeen and Constance; it might be in my power to re-unite them. Much that had helped to sunder them was attributable to Richard Woodleigh's scheming; it was my place to discover to what extent that scheming had been carried.

In the beginning of the year 1849, three weeks after the return of my cousins to Grove House, I made Caroline Woodleigh my confidant. I felt less reluctance in confessing my folly to her than to Stephen Markingham. During those three weeks nothing had been heard or seen of cousin Dick; I knew that his engagement with Miss Heberdeen was broken off, and that Miss Heberdeen was ill.

I have said I made Caroline Woodleigh my confidant. One day, early in the new year, when we were for a few minutes alone together, I told the story of the strange revival of my hopes, and acknowledged that the jealousy of Heberdeen was not wholly

groundless. I had no need to add the name of him who planted anew those hopes in my heart, for my confession was hardly ended when she said:—

"Richard, he was your adviser then?"

"Yes," I answered.

"I have mistrusted him since my father's death," she said hastily; "and have even reproached myself for my suspicions. Alas! they were not misplaced, I felt they were not, even by that false air of frankness which has misled so many. For his sake, in the hope that he had repented much that was guilty in the past, I have tried to love him like a sister and—have failed! That evil past, but known *now* to him and me, has stood between us and kept us ever watchful, cold, and distant."

"And yet I trusted him, despised the warnings of my friends — the warnings which your looks conveyed."

"Those who know Richard Woodleigh thoroughly will not be surprised at that," she said; "and many who have known him all his life are still deceived — mother, sisters, brother amongst the number."

"Is it right, Caroline, that they should trust the false?"

"I think so," she replied; "for it would kill my mother, and my sisters are happy in their ignorance. There is only Upton who may suffer by my silence — by my promise to a dying father. Poor Upton, though he knows there is a secret, his honest heart will not suspect his brother. But we are wandering from the subject," she said, suddenly becoming grave, almost stern; "we were talking of your follies."

"True."

"Will the follies ever end?"

"I hope so."

"Hope without effort never worked good yet, Robert," she said; "you will live on in idleness, for the habits of the past have become a chain of iron."

"I will break it, for I am tired of this life. Caroline, you must advise me how to act—you—"

"Advise you," she exclaimed, angrily; "what advice can I offer, or you profit by? You are your own wilful master, you will be so ever."

"You do not know what thoughts I have had lately."

"Thoughts of Constance, were they not?" she answered with a bitterness that took me by surprise; "thoughts of her engagement, and how to put an end to it? You have been lucky, sir; the lovers are parted; perseverance has but to follow up the chase and win that prize which has been the study of your life!"

"No; the Woodleigh Love-Chase ended, Caroline, when my eyes were opened to deceit. It is a prize no longer to me—I do not seek it, wish it. My presence here has marred the happiness of more than one; I will make an effort to restore that happiness, and then—"

"And then?" said Caroline, anxiously.

"I will go away for ever—go beyond the seas again, and seek my own fortune."

"Is not England wide enough for you?"

"No."

"And what is this one effort you will make?"

"To re-unite those whom I have helped to sunder," was my answer; "to see Heberdeen

and explain my share of the folly which robbed him of happiness."

"Will Constance thank you?" said Caroline, thoughtfully; "is it even for Constance's interest to let the jealous and headstrong return again to her side? It has been no lover's quarrel, and the way to reconciliation is not easy. The words were harsh, his accusations unjust, and my sister suffers from them still!"

"What may not Richard have said to Heberdeen?"

"True; Heberdeen may have been deceived —it is as well to solve the mystery, and it is —shall I flatter you—a noble act of Robert Woodleigh's."

"I will go at once," said I, springing up.

"Impulsive as ever, Robert," she said with a smile; "and, for once, on the right side. There is one thing you must remember, cousin,—you go to explain, not to seek an explanation. If his pride will not give one to Constance or yourself, then he is unworthy of my sister's heart, and Constance's life will be happier alone."

I left Grove House immediately. Full of my one purpose, I went straight to the house of my rival, who had not given up Great Coram Street or abandoned office business.

"Mr. Heberdeen was at home; would I be good enough to state my name, or send up my card?"

"Be kind enough to say a gentleman desires a few minutes' conversation with him."

The servant departed with my message, and I stood alone in the waiting-room, experiencing no enviable feelings. Noble and honorable may be the task of the peace-maker, but his sensations are not always delightful!

Footsteps on the stairs, a martial stride along the passage, a quick movement of the handle of the door, and then Edmund Heberdeen was before me. He was looking very pale and stern; the return of half his father's fortune had not smoothed the furrows over his eyes, or given him the most contented expression of countenance. He gave a visible start at recognizing me, and

then, making the most of his height, said haughtily :—

"Mr. Woodleigh, the honor of your visit takes me by surprise."

"I have come to perform a just, but painful duty, Mr. Heberdeen," was my reply; "to explain much that was in the past mysterious. I have come alone, unprompted."

"I wish to hear nothing concerning the past, Mr. Woodleigh," said Heberdeen; "it is full of bitter memories—it has deceived me. Your time for explanation has arrived too late, sir!"

He bowed, as if with the intention of retiring, but I said, quickly :—

"It is never too late for the confession of a wrong. I believe, Mr. Heberdeen, that I have injured you in that past which you accuse, injured you in part wilfully, in part unwillingly, and for both I have to express my deep regret."

Edmund Heberdeen looked surprised as he replied :—

"I have heard a great deal of you in my time, Mr. Woodleigh; have been told you were selfish, passionate, obstinate, and proud,

but I have never been led to expect—have never in my own observation witnessed—that your leading virtue was humility."

"Neither is it, sir," I replied; "and the faults which some kind friend has pointed out to you are reigning ones; I acknowledge them. Stating so much, perhaps you will believe they were no light struggles of remorse that brought me hither?"

"This is a penitence I do not understand," said Heberdeen, still distant.

At any other time, or in a case less urgent, I should have long since lost my temper, but I had made a promise to myself, and was resolved to keep it.

"Let me explain, then, and relieve you from my unwelcome presence," I said. "Mr. Heberdeen, we once had a mutual friend, named Richard Woodleigh."

"Not a word of him, sir," exclaimed Heberdeen; "he was a false traitor, and I will not hear his name!"

"I must speak of him for a few moments," I said, hastily; "I will be brief enough. May I ask a question?"

Heberdeen did not answer, and taking silence for consent, I said:

"Has it not lately struck you that Richard Woodleigh's part of traitor was played to more than one?"

Heberdeen breathed hard.

"Was played to you, to me, to Constance Woodleigh, deceiving all of us?"

"Well, well," he said, impatiently.

"Let me tell you how he deceived me; it will be my explanation also," I continued; "he led me, by hints and artful suggestions, to believe that his sister Constance had ever loved me, and that her affection had been only turned aside by the studied efforts of certain members of her family; that the engagement between you and my cousin was on the eve of a disruption — that she had never loved you in her heart! Presenting this before me constantly, flattering my weakness and my vanity, reviving in me old thoughts and hopes, he set me dreaming on a future that could never be. He made me your rival, sought every opportunity of bringing me and Constance together, and every opportunity of thwarting you!"

"Is all this true?" exclaimed Heberdeen, wildly; "yes, yes, I see all now; you were his dupe as well as I! He set me against you, filled me with hate, distrust, and jealousy, spoke of your wealth and expectations, and the power it had to influence Upton, your aunt, even Constance, in your favor. It was a deep and dangerous game to play."

"If we had but met on the afternoon of that day which ended your engagement."

"If *we* had met, sir!" passionately interrupted Heberdeen—"if one spark of that feeling which has brought us face to face again had been existent then, you would have saved me from a life's unhappiness. I came that day to see you, to ask you calmly and earnestly the reasons for your attention to my betrothed, —came even, at Constance's suggestion, to ask your pardon for my rudeness of the morning. I lowered *my* pride then, and begged an interview. I was miserable, full of suspicions, anxious for the explanation then which you declined, and which now, unsolicited, you come to make. Too late, sir—too late!"

"Did you not come to demand that explanation as your right, to interdict my visits to the Warwick, to refuse all communication with me save through Richard Woodleigh?"

"No!"

"He is a greater villain than I thought him!"

"Did *you* not send down a refusal to see or listen to me? Did you not even taunt me till my heart was full of rage and hate, and I could have seen no virtues in an angel? Oh! I have been a fool and madman!"

"One thing more, before I leave you," I said. "Your own actions sundered you from Constance Woodleigh, not mine or hers! In all my life, before, during, or after your engagement, I have never received one word of encouragement from her, one look which could give me hope to win her. I have followed the shadows, and trusted in false friends—it is over now; I am awakening at last!"

"And Constance," said Heberdeen gloomily, "is she well?"

"No."

"She does not think—she does not wish—she cannot, after what has passed—" he began in an excited manner.

"I can say nothing. I have done my duty—your heart should prompt you what is yours. Good night."

Heberdeen caught me by the hand.

"I have not thanked you yet, Woodleigh."

"I want no thanks," I muttered, striving to release my hand from his clasp; "my conscience, which is not quite dead yet, thanks me sufficiently. I came for my own sake, and in justice to her I shall see only once again in life, not," I added sternly, "for *your* comfort, Edmund Heberdeen!"

He dropped my hand, his proud look returned, softened again, vanished.

"Still I thank you for teaching me my duty and setting me an example which, however painful, shall be at once performed, God willing."

We parted not there—it was in the lighted streets outside that we went our separate

ways, both agitated, thoughtful; I to the house of my patron, who was becoming thoughtful too, he to the feet of her he had loved and had lost.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE SECRETS THAN ONE.

SINCE my eyes had been opened to the deceit of Richard Woodleigh, had I altered for the better? Had I been taught the weak point of my character?—found who were friends and who were enemies at last, and learned no lesson?

Yes, the lesson had been learned, and I was not ungrateful to my teachers! I no longer avoided my step-father; I sought his home, heard him tell me of my faults—in how new and gentle a manner—listened even to all my mother said and hoped of me before she died! Still there was the same restless spirit in my

breast chafing and exciting me—I was alone in the world without a purpose—I was still dependent on Mr. Markingham! My step-father silently studied the signs of my awakening, and waited his opportunity to speak. Experience in his duties had taught him that there is a time and season for all communications, and that the best and truest counsel may, unwisely given, work all the harm it is intended to avert.

The great turn to my thoughts was not given by Mr. Bowden or his daughter; not by Upton Woodleigh, whom I met sometimes in Mr. Bowden's chapel, at Mr. Bowden's table, and who was always there by the 'merest accident in the world;' not by his sister Caroline, or Constance, whose smiles were back again, and whose heart was full of happiness; not by Stephen Markingham; not by any who had ever offered me advice.

"There is a friend of yours waiting to see you in the next room," said Mr. Bowden to me as I entered his house late one evening.

"A friend of mine! may I ask his name?"

"He called yesterday for your address,

but upon hearing you intended to visit me this evening, he proposed to meet you here."

"Who is he?" I asked impatiently.

"One whom I had a strong objection to see your friend once; one who has improved very much, thanks to that which tests the true nature of most men—misfortune; his name is Arrow."

"Tom!" I exclaimed, rushing from my step-father's presence.

When I was in the hall I walked more slowly towards the room wherein an old friend was waiting for me—he from whom I had parted with signs of true friendship, and yet never sought to find again. I entered the room with a burning cheek, and Tom Arrow, half inclined to cry and look stern, half inclined to laugh and dash at me, rose from his seat facing Miss Bowden, and said hoarsely:—

"Well, Bob, how are you?"

"Better than I deserve to be for neglecting an old comrade," I replied, shaking him heartily by the hand.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Bob," said Tom; "and I can't help being glad to see you, though I thought I shouldn't. Don't go, Miss Bowden; I'm not going to cry—upon my soul, I ain't!"

But Miss Bowden, murmuring something about 'old friends' confessions,' was already at the door.

"She's a nice girl," said Tom, in an ecstasy, when she had quitted the room; "what I call a sensible, practical young lady. If I had not been engaged to the dearest little creature on the face of the earth, she would have done for me—clean!"

"Engaged, eh, Tom!"

"Yes, to be married—Jenny's her name—in exactly eight years' time, come next Sunday, but I'll tell you all about her presently. So you are really glad to see me, Bob?"

"It gives me a pleasure I have not felt for many a day."

"And yet you did not know whether I were alive or dead—and didn't care!" said Tom, reproachfully.

"I have been a fool and an idiot the last

three years, Tom—have neglected all my best friends, and studied new and false ones."

"Well, that is complimentary, at any rate —a fool and an idiot. What a remarkable coincidence! —so have I."

I could not help laughing at Tom Arrow's grave countenance.

"That is,—until I met with Jenny," added Tom, "one of my old pal's sisters she is.—I'll tell you about her presently. I have been giving Mr. Bowden a little sketch of my life —has he told you?"

"He left that revelation for my friend."

"Then, Bob, I'll make it clear in a very few words. After you left England I went on in the old style — gay, rollicking, lazy style, wasn't it, Bob? — came into possession of grandmother's money—what was left of it!— spent it at billiards, in giving evening parties, and going to races, lent it to my friends, flung it at people, pitched it to the right, tossed it to the left, till it was all gone but fifty-two pounds, nine and sixpence! I was thinking of the neatest way to pitch that after the rest, when I met with a serious

friend — only think, a serious friend,—who attends Mr. Bowden's chapel and is a regular methodistical medical student, the only one at Guy's! And," with a chuckle, "he's got a sister, Bob, and—I'll tell you more about her presently."

"And did this moral medical student tell you it was time to sow your wild oats, Tom?"

"Yes, he took me home to his house and talked to me; so did his sister—did I tell you her name was Jenny?"

"Yes."

"And we went to hear Mr. Bowden preach, and he gave me the horrors till I thought of the stone-china shepherdess; then I burst out laughing and disgusted the congregation. However, I took to studying in earnest, and both Watts—that's my Jenny's brother—and I passed our examinations and became M.D.'s last week, my boy."

"My dear Tom, I congratulate you."

"Don't be in a hurry. My father came to town yesterday and swore he'd cut me off with a shilling, and that I shouldn't marry Jenny, and that I had been a fool all my life, on

which last point I perfectly agreed with him. We got over our quarrel at last, and he forgave me like a brick of a father as he is, and paid my passage-money into the bargain.

"Passage-money—what do you mean?"

"Didn't I tell you I was going to Australia in that fast-sailing ship, the Phœnix?—and that I am going to stop in the new land till I have made money enough to come back to England and marry Jenny?—I'm going to tell you all about her presently! I shall make a fortune in eight years, you know."

"If you have turned over a new leaf, there's a chance of it."

"In eight years there is a chance, I believe you. And Jenny will wait that time for me; she has solemnly promised it, Bob!"

"When do you start for Australia?"

"Next month."

"Alone?"

"Yes, all alone in my glory."

"Tom Arrow, I'll go with you!" I cried. "I have had enough of the old world, I'll try my luck in the new!"

"You don't mean that!"

"I do indeed."

"That will be glorious, Bob; what games—but," suddenly becoming grave, "have you turned over a new leaf, too?"

"Yes."

"Oh! that's all right then," said he, "and two can make their fortunes as well as one, any day in the week. But what will Mr. Markingham, your cousins, Mr. Bowden say?"

"Nothing that will alter my determination."

"Well, you were always quick enough in making up your mind, so I'll hope for the best; and now—I'll tell you all about my Jenny!"

He was still talking of Jenny when Mr. Bowden and his daughter made their re-appearance. I did not speak of my intentions that night; I kept my resolution to myself and brooded over it. Every day that followed strengthened me in my resolve; there was a wild daring in the scheme which pleased me. To leave all of them, to go forth to the new world with a heart full of courage, to shake

off the load of dependence which I had so long slavishly borne, and see if my own hands, my own brain, could not work out a future! I felt lighter beneath the new thoughts, and though there were one or two pangs at my heart when I remembered my friends, yet they did not weaken my purpose.

Those friends I told at last. Mr. Markingham, who had been the first to offer me the helping hand and share his fortune with me, was the first to hear my secret; it was his right. I can see now the look of surprise and the shade which passed over the keen-looking-face.

"Well, if it must be, Woodleigh, so be it," he said; "I did not think you would have so soon tired of the philosopher."

"Not tired of *you*, sir," replied I, earnestly, "but of my own inactive life, which is unsuited for me, adds to my discontent, weakens my mind, makes me morbid, childish, weak. I see the world before me; I see the workers on it are the happiest men and wear the brightest looks, and I know my duty is

amongst them, working too. I never cared for riches or display; I would rather be my cousin Upton than the son of a lord with twenty thousand a year now! I want to see if my own exertions cannot win me honor and wealth."

"This is a great change, Robert; what has brought it about?"

"Much that has happened lately, but more that is mysterious. I know, at least, that I have been miserable, felt like a slave since your money has been lavished upon me—that that money has made me false friends, made me an enemy to myself."

"I can believe it, and yet—"

"And yet you must not think me ungrateful for all your past kindness, think I shall not ever remember and honor you. Oh! sir, I know you will be happier without me—what good have I ever done, what companion have I ever been, that you, by so much as a word, should say to me, 'Stay?'"

"I am getting on for fifty years of age; at fifty a man does not easily form new ties, or give up without regret the old."

"You will form new and holier ties, sir," said I; "you were not made for the life that is lonely, or the hearth that is desolate."

"Well, well, you have acted for the best—you will come back some day a new man, I feel it—know it. Woodleigh, old friend, brother, son — what is it? I will not say 'stay,' but 'God speed you!'"

I told my story to Mr. Bowden and his daughter; told them of the sudden pride which had sprung up in my breast, and which turned from the gifts of my patron; told them of my desire for a new life, a purpose, a something to look forward to and struggle for, and they understood me, and said also 'God speed me!'

With the same story I went to Grove House, Paddington, one night in February, little thinking of a story following close on mine, a darker, sadder one. I made my confession in the old familiar drawing-room where I had sat so often, had such unprofitable thoughts, been always treated as a friend and equal. They were all round me that night; even Johnny was there, a big bold-looking

youth, who stood at my side with eyes and mouth wide open, a picture of wonder.

They were all there; aunt Woodleigh, in her easy-chair before the fire, her daughter Constance, to be married soon to Mr. Heberdeen, seated at her side, Mary, all wonder like her brother Johnny, Upton, an attentive listener, with his earnest eyes fixed on my face, and Caroline, the calmest, gravest, most unmoved.

As I told my story, I looked more than once towards Caroline. I could not understand that immobility of visage. I thought she, of all of them — she who had listened to the last words of my mother, and had through life shown her interest in that mother's son—would have been most interested in my going, have been the first to encourage me in my undertaking. I was pained, for it was only Caroline who remained silent and expressed no regrets at parting, no wishes for my welfare.

Words of hope and encouragement which fell from the rest of my cousins, from aunt Woodleigh, did not stir my heart much, or

draw from me many thanks; even Constance's best wishes fell on arid soil.

Aunt Woodleigh, one of the worst of observers, was the first that night to detect, or at least to speak of, the studied silence of her eldest child.

"Caroline, my dear, have you nothing to say concerning your cousin's departure?"

"Nothing," she answered, briefly.

"Dear me! I should have thought you would have had a great deal to say."

"You have all forestalled me," was the answer. "Robert has received words of advice, hope, and encouragement—it is useless to repeat them."

"Have I acted wisely in giving up Mr. Markingham, Caroline?" I asked; "or is it another of my follies to shrink from the hand of the patron and go forth alone?"

"Change seems the best thing for you," said she, coldly; "you are fond of new scenes, new faces, and the memory of the old will not trouble your heart much. It is the easiest thing in the world to forget!"

"It will not be an easy task for me—I shall not attempt it."

"Time will assist you without an effort of your own."

Caroline's coldness, even indifference, to my future appeared to surprise others beside myself. Constance was perplexed, and Upton kept looking at Caroline out of the corners of his eyes in a very inquisitive manner.

Upton Woodleigh, who, at home or abroad, had always business floating in his clever little head, changed the conversation by enquiring:—

"If I would undertake a commission for him to Australia?"

"A hundred, if you wish, Upton."

"I have great faith in Australia," said Upton; "every belief that it will rank second to none in the history of nations. Who can dream what a land like Australia may become fifty years hence; what the hand and the brain of the Saxon may achieve for it in the time that is coming?"

"And what help Robert Woodleigh may afford to its progress," said Constance, smiling.

"To be sure, Constance," said Upton; "lay the foundation of another Woodleigh business at the Antipodes. I should think contracting and carrying the finest trade in the world there. Robert knows something about it, and if he feels inclined to start a business in the name of 'Woodleigh cousins,' we'll begin a small firm on the strength of it. What say you, *partner?*"

"That you have too much confidence in me, Upton—that there is more of my impulsive nature than of your own sober sense in the proposal."

"It isn't the first time I have thought of Australia," said Upton, "and wished for a managing man there. Still, we will not decide anything to-night—there wouldn't be a great deal of sense in that, perhaps. You must write home to us, Robert, and give us your opinion of the place before we begin a game at speculation on the other side of the globe. However, that need not prevent me proving to you, Robert, that I *have* thought of Australia, and of a plan of business that would stand a fair chance of success there. Come to my

study for a moment, and I'll bother you a little with calculations."

"Not bother me—I am a man of business now, remember!"

"The Woodleighs were always capital fellows for business," affirmed Upton, as we made our excuses to the ladies and adjourned to the study.

In that study, on my last night under the roof of Grove House, I found matter for surprise and admiration. I found in the youth of Upton all the caution and foresight of middle age, the mind to embrace great schemes in the money world, with that prudence which alone makes great schemes successful. Every man has his hobby; Upton's was business. His heart and soul were in that, as other men's are in pleasures, books, sciences. And yet no man, old or young, in business or out of it, had a larger heart, or was full of more generous sentiments.

Upton had indeed thought of starting a business in Australia, similar to his own in England. Paper after paper, column after column of statistics he piled before me, with a

profusion, and dilated upon with an eloquence, that perfectly bewildered me, and he was still expounding, arguing, convincing, when a servant-maid entered the room and announced that a gentleman desired a private interview with him.

"Show him up," said Upton.

"Shall I return to the drawing-room?" I said, rising.

"No, no," replied Upton, quickly, "keep your seat. I have no state secrets to hide from my friends; I always distrust people who want private interviews—they have generally something to sell, or they want money, or an order for advertisements, or—"

He stopped and changed color as the door opened and the servant announced:—

"Mr. Melville."

Mr. Melville was a middle-aged man, sharp-featured, and of short stature, with "matter of fact" stamped on his countenance—certainly not a man to be afraid of or change color at.

"Pray take a chair," said Upton, rather nervously, "I did not anticipate the pleasure

of a call this evening. Is—is anything wrong?"

"For my own credit, for the credit of my employer, I sincerely hope not."

Mr. Melville took the chair by the side of the library-table, and glanced towards me.

"My cousin, Mr. Woodleigh," said Upton, more in explanation than introduction.

Mr. Melville, with a half-bow in my direction, looked at Upton, coughed and fidgeted.

"There is no occasion for Mr. Woodleigh's withdrawal," said Upton; "Robert, I beg you will not retire, I have more to say to you."

Mr. Melville drew forth a pocket-book, unclasped it, or rather unlocked it, fumbled amidst a mass of papers, and finally produced three banker's cheques which he tendered with a trembling hand to Upton.

"Those cheques were presented at our bank this afternoon; I, head clerk to Messrs. Wilkins, Waters, Edmonds and Co., received them, cashed them. Being a large demand on your balance, I examined them with

particular care, but saw nothing to suspect. When the bank closed, I re-examined them, placed them before Mr. Edmonds, who, although believing them correct also, yet still thought it would be the most judicious course to deviate from the usual routine, and call here in case of accident."

Upton took the cheques and glanced at them. He was deathly white, and yet so firm and unmoved that the suspicions which were stealing on me were arrested by his composure. The hand that held the cheques shook not as he returned them to Mr. Melville.

"These will come to me in the usual course, Mr. Melville," said he; "they—they are quite—correct!"

Mr. Melville, evidently relieved by this statement, rose at once.

"It affords me great pleasure to hear it, Mr. Woodleigh," said he; "for although the signatures are perfect, yet, in these times, we cannot be too careful."

"Not too careful—no," said Upton, absently.

"I trust you will allow that carefulness to

plead my excuse for intruding on you, Mr. Woodleigh?"

"No excuse is necessary," answered Upton; "I am obliged by your visit. It might have been of inestimable service had those cheques been—forgeries."

Mr. Melville retired. Upton politely saw him to the door, returned and sat down before me with a still more ghastly face.

"We were talking of Australia," he said—"of the profits to be derived from my—my plan of—how my head swims!"

"My dear Upton, you are ill!"

"No, Robert, not ill," he said, clutching my arm—"a swimming in my head; I am subject to it! I shall be better in a minute."

He released my arm and said faintly:—

"A glass of water, Robert. Will you ring, please?"

My hand was on the bell, when he exclaimed:—

"No, no—you will find water in my dressing-room, the first room on your right—don't ring, for God's sake!"

I took a wax candle from the desk, crossed the landing hurriedly, passed into the dressing-room, poured out a glass of water, came out again and met Caroline Woodleigh face to face.

"Robert!" she exclaimed, "what's the matter; where is Upton?"

"In his study; he is a little faint, that's all."

Before I could stop her, she had flown into the study—was bending over him and looking with a painful earnestness into his face.

"Oh! Upton, dear brother Upton, what has happened? Is there more trouble in store for us? You will tell me, I am sure."

He did not answer; his eyes closed, and his head fell forward on his chest. There was no exclamation from Caroline; her self-possession suddenly returned, and though her face was as pale as her brother's, she was full of courage, prudence. Her quick hands unfastened his neck-tie, snatched the water from me, and dashed it in his face.

"Who has been here?" she said.

I hesitated.

"Who has been here?" she demanded, more peremptorily; "is it I who am to be kept in the dark, to be in my ignorance the cause of evil? Robert, I *will* be answered!"

"Mr. Melville has been here."

"Who is he?" she said, impatiently.

"The head clerk to Upton's bankers. He brought some cheques for Upton to inspect."

"And Upton—"

"Says they are correct—that there is no mistake."

"Poor Upton!" murmured Caroline, as she bent over her brother and pressed her lips to his forehead.

"Caroline!" I exclaimed, "do you think —fear—"

"The worst," she answered, mournfully.

Upton breathed more freely, but there was a wild look in his eyes as he raised his head and looked round him.

"Where's Dick?—tell him that—"

The wild look vanished as he met the gaze of his sister, and felt her hand steal into his own. He laid his head upon her bosom, saying:—

"Ah! Caroline, are you here? I may want a faithful friend like you to comfort me soon!"

"No, no, dear—I hope not."

"I can guess now, Carry, the secret of my father's will—it is all plain as noonday! But why was that secret kept from me, when the knowledge of it might have saved me from ruin?"

"Not ruin, Upton."

"God knows!" was the solemn answer.

"I will tell you why our father was silent concerning an act of treachery akin to that which has occurred to-night," said Caroline, vehemently; "because your brother Richard craved pardon on his knees, called his Maker to witness his repentance, swore that no temptation should lead him into crime again, prayed for the silence of the grave over his unworthy act."

"And father—?"

"Believed him—promised, for the honor of the family, that silence which he begged?"

"But you?"

"At the first discovery of his son's guilt,

my father, in the fulness of his grief, sought me out and asked my counsel in his trouble. I knew the secret from the first. I was a witness to my brother's feigned repentance."

"And deceived by it?"

"Yes. I was his sister, and could not believe him wholly bad," she answered; "I promised him my silence, and have kept it till this night—not without fears and grave misgivings."

"And yet I was not warned," said Upton, reproachfully.

"Upton," said Caroline, "to our father, on his dying bed, I renewed the promise made to Richard, and I could not break it without sufficient cause. With all my doubts, there was no proof of the blackness of his heart or sign of the baseness which it harbored. He came in the midst of us; he was my mother's hope; he took his place by her side, was the loving son and brother to the last!"

"God forgive that brother, whom I shall never see again, never touch his hand or look into his face! He has gone from us, guilty and disgraced; he is to all of us from this time—dead!"

He dashed his hand across his eyes a moment, then said:—

"For his poor mother's sake, let him go upon his way — that mother who must not know a word of this, who must think he has gone abroad, is coming back some day, is still her frank, honest, faithful child. I take the loss upon myself; and as it is not all my fortune he has robbed me of, I will not call it ruin, Carry."

"Ruin and Upton Woodleigh's name will never be connected," said his sister, more cheerfully; "energy, honesty, and perseverance go not the down-hill road—there is a law in heaven against it."

"Ah! my warm-hearted sister, faithful friend, wise counsellor, I shall never lack encouragement whilst you are by my side — you make up for my loss."

"And that in time will—"

"Hush! I am not thinking of my money—but of my brother!"

Upton's generous mind could even find excuses for that brother's guilt—it was so

natural for him to look to the bright side and soften down the dark.

"Perhaps he took it as his birthright, Carry," he said, "thought two hundred a-year almost a beggar's pittance. Well, it wasn't much, and if poor father had entirely forgiven him, what a different life his might have been!"

"No," said his sister; "his father acted wisely. Two thousand a-year, instead of two hundred, would have made him more reckless and profligate, not have changed his nature—with the lesser sum there was a chance of his becoming industrious and putting those talents which he possessed to that use which the Great Giver intended."

Caroline turned to me.

"Robert, you have been witness to a painful scene, have become possessed of a more painful secret. We can trust you?"

"Yes."

"So let the story end then," said Upton; "it is a sad one for human nature, there is no reason to repeat it. Part of it will ever remain a mystery to me."

"What part is that?" asked his sister.

"My signature to the cheques—a signature that would have deceived myself. In all my life I never wrote a letter to Richard signed anything but 'Upton,' and my business letters are written by my clerk."

"You signed your name in full, Upton, to a letter written some months ago to me—a letter which he saw and read—a letter which I lost."

"That may be the right answer to the riddle." He paused, then added quickly, "I said let the story end, and yet I dwell upon it still!"

"Before it is dismissed for ever, Upton," I said, "let me speak of an offer I desire to make."

"No," he answered; "I know what you would say. I cannot take your help, assistance, or balk you in the projects you have formed. Leave me to fight my way alone—it is better for me; there will be many friends to help me, if I need them."

I did not press him; I knew Upton's word was never changed. We went down-stairs, resumed our place at the fireside, talked once more of my travels, my prospects and inten-

tions. Aunt Woodleigh, in her happy ignorance, had only thought for me that night, only concern for my dangers and temptations, and, for the few remaining hours of my stay, Upton's strong mind shook off those dark impressions which were to rest upon it for many a future day.

The time passed on, the hour grew late, and still I lingered. It was my last night in Grove House; I might never see any of them again; old scenes, friends, hopes, were to be all parted with, to fade away dream-like, and leave me desolate!

There is an end to all things, and the end came. Amidst all the pain of parting, it was pleasant to know that I—ill-mannered, foolish, reckless being as I had ever proved myself—should be missed, that there were tears in the eyes of my friends, and sorrow in their looks, —in all but Caroline's, whose coldness seemed to increase as the minutes sped away, who said 'Good bye' with an averted head, and was the only one of all my friends who did not see me to the threshold of Grove House.

Standing on that threshold, my aunt and

cousins near me, I missed the face of Caroline. I thought, before I vanished for ever, she might have said 'good bye' again, and I bit my quivering lip to keep it from betraying me. I clasped Upton's hand again, kissed my aunt and cousins, I hastened away, then paused,—came back!

"I cannot go away in doubt," I said; "I must see Caroline once more; I fear I have offended her."

Leaving them in the hall awaiting my return, I hurried back into the drawing-room. At the open door I paused again—she was kneeling by her mother's chair as if in prayer—she was looking upwards as a saint might look to heaven! Could I disturb her then—at such a time—suffering from the trouble that had fallen on her house? Her eyes were full of tears, her clasped hands trembling, her voice was low and stifling. It was a sorrow that I dared not trespass on, and I made one backward step, when my own name, thrice repeated in a strange abandonment of grief, arrested me.

In a moment the mystery of a life, the

story of one faithful heart, flashed on me; I knew all then, the mists were vanishing, the dazzling, happy truth was shining in upon me!

Another moment, and I was at her side, and she had started to her feet, her bosom heaving, her eyes flashing, her hand pointing to the door.

"Go, sir, go—nor speak a single word! You have chosen your path, follow it, it may lead unto your happiness. What you have heard just now, believe no more in than an idle dream. I beg of you to leave me!"

"No, Caroline, not leave you yet. I came back to say good bye again; I came to ask why, in the last moments of a parting for long years, you were more cold and distant than the rest. I return to find you weeping, praying as only one has ever prayed for me, and my heart is full of hope. Oh, Caroline, dear cousin, don't drive that hope away!"

"It is the madness of a moment—you would have gone away and—"

"And have thought of you all my life," I interrupted, "thought of you as some

angel far above my reach. Caroline, you must not strive to snatch away this hand until I tell you that there is no happiness for me unless you give me hope to win you for a wife. That hope will spur me on in the new world, nerve me in my labors, gladden every task, and make no barrier insurmountable."

"The folly of a moment, Robert—the old impulsive nature. Oh! leave me now, for ever, and do not wring my heart thus. It is a coward's act to take advantage of my weakness."

"It is a lover's act to seek the promise which may some day make him happy!"

"I cannot promise," she said, mournfully; "my duty is by my mother's side, my ruined brother's. And I cannot yet believe—you must pardon me, Robert, but it is a bitter truth—in a passion the very wildness of which is its surest sign of evanescence."

"Give me then your word that you will not be another's, or hear love from another's lips for two short years at least; grant me those two years in Australia, say that at their expiration you will give me hope if I still

think of you, am working for you, and I will go away content!"

"Why wish to afford me another proof of your inconstant nature?"

"Then I go away despairing, and that recklessness which has ever been my curse comes back!"

"Stay!—I—I—give that word if it will make you happy, Robert."

"And if I remind you of it in the future, and claim the promise which it holds out, Carry?"

She turned away her blushing face and answered:—

"You will not be then the only happy one!"

For one brief moment my arms were round her, her swimming eyes were looking into mine, my lips were on her cheek, and then I tore myself away, dashed into the hall, passed my aunt and cousins with strange unmeaning gestures, and was gone!

CHAPTER VII.

"WHICH ENDETH ALL
IN RECONCILEMENT."

THERE is but little more to say. The history of my travels, trials, struggles in Australia is not for this book, has nothing with this book in common. Is it not enough to say I kept my word to Caroline—wiser to end my story thus than weary the reader who has so kindly followed in my steps by prating of my profits, losses, cash in hand, and balance at my banker's? Yes; but ere the story end, there are one or two figures flitting by which I would fain arrest, fain believe —idle dreamer that I am—the reader would know more about.

Believing that, I look towards them in the year of 1859, look across the sea from my Australian home, gladdened by a loving English wife. Peace, rest, and happiness seem to have fallen on old friends. My step-father lives, preaches, and is honored by his flock; his daughter still sends forth silently, namelessly, her creations to the world. She is happy, and writes me word she don't think she shall ever marry now; for she is close on forty.

And Upton? He did not give way beneath his loss—he only redoubled his exertions and built his fortunes firmer. He is still a business man, lives at present at Grove House with his mother, is the only cousin of mine unmarried; for Johnny, at the ripe age of twenty-four, is a Benedict, and the "father of"—to quote Aunt Woodleigh—"such a baby!"

If Upton should ever marry Miss Bowden—sometimes I think he will—Aunt Woodleigh will make the best of mothers-in-law—not being a strong-minded woman.

The figures flit by rapidly; Constance and

Heberdeen—Tom Arrow and his wife—their homes are in the sunshine; may the shadows never darken them!

Another couple ere we close the book—the husband many years older than the wife, but both full of such trust and confidence in one another that many couples, better matched in years, might take them for a pattern. Generous, great-hearted, deep-thinking Stephen Markingham—his happiness came late in life, it will last, God willing, to the end. He has given up many of his pet theories, abandoned his peculiar ideas upon religion, don't even smoke his great meerschaum so often. Much of his philosophy, all his atheism, and that 'horrid habit of smoking!' have been abandoned at Harriet Markingham's desire, and satirists shrug their shoulders and say, 'hen-pecked!' Perhaps so, but what pleasant hen-pecking it must be to make such a fine old English gentleman of the philosopher!

And Richard Woodleigh, the only "black sheep" of this story—what of him? Poetical justice demands a victim—it is the villain of the tale who, in volume three, sinks down the

trap discomfited. And yet I can say little of him. He has gone, and left no trace. Rich or poor, we know enough of human nature to believe he is not happy—the robber and the schemer never are. We may meet them in their purple and fine linen; they may fare sumptuously and sit at great men's tables; they may go on falsely smiling to the end; but the sword is always hanging by a hair, and fear, suspicion, and remorse lurk for ever in the darkness.

From the darkness, let me turn to the brightness of my present life—the shadows vanish, the light steals over all. I look into the face of a dear wife bending over my shoulder as I write, I hear a little voice say 'Father' at my side, and I envy no man's lot!

THE END.

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